

BERNARD F. SHINKMAN

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is the third of December, 2004. This is done with Bernard F. Shinkman, S-H-I-N-K-M-A-N. Done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. And I regret to say that we have already put in about a half hour of discussion and we discovered it wasn't recording. So we'll start again. Do it for a short period and then we'll pick this up another time. You go by the name of Buck, B-U-C-K.

SHINKMAN: I do indeed. I can tell you there's an anecdote behind that. Always full of anecdotes.

Q: Alright.

SHINKMAN: I was named Bernard Francis Shinkman, III, named after my uncle and my great grandfather who came over from Eastern Europe in the 1840s. And for reasons that I don't know, my unclwho I love very muchis nickname was Bunny, B-U-N-N-Y. Not an unknown nickname, but a pretty rare nickname, particularly for a boy.

In 1960 my parents felt - as I mentioned in the last half hour - that I was being lazy at Walter Johnson Senior High School and decided to ship me off to boarding school outside of Boston. And we sat around the dinner table at Sunday dinner one Sunday, with my two older brothers and me and my parents, and decided that it was evident that going off to boarding school at the age of 16 as the new kid, with all these other kids who had been there forever, was going to be hard enough. Carrying with you the baggage of a nickname like Bunny was going to make it suicidal. So we thought, well, what other nickname to choose? And we came up as a matter of discussion with Buck. And I can't remember who came up with it. And so we adopted it that day at lunch, and I've been called Buck since 1960.

Q: So it was a rational choice.

SHINKMAN: It was a rational choice. It wasn't something involved. It wasn't something cute that I said when I was in my crib at night. It was just a rational choice to help me get through boarding school.

Q: Can you tell me first about the name Shinkman and then where your father's family came from?

SHINKMAN: Yes indeed. They came from a part of East Germany, or Eastern Europe, I'm not absolutely sure where it is. I have the name of the town, I think it was Grifswald, which is somewhere perhaps in what was Eastern Germany or in Poland.

Q: But basically a Germanic background?

SHINKMAN: A Germanic background, absolutely. And came to the United States in the 1840s. I'm not sure if it was for political or for religious freedom or whether it was for economic opportunity, but I suspect all three of those together. There was, as we discussed earlier, a wave of immigration coming from that part of the world.

Q: Known as the 48-ers.

SHINKMAN: The 48-ers. The Carl Schurz expeditions. And then my great grandfather came as part of those. Went straight to Grand Rapids, Michigan. Settled there. And that's where the family lived and where my father was raised until he moved to New York.

Q: Where did your father go to University?

SHINKMAN: He went to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. And graduated from there in I think 1919 or 1920. The family, as I mentioned earlier, when we lived in Austria at one stage and we'll get to that my mother did a lot of research on the family name. We have a copy of the family crest that was brought over with my great grandfather. And it includes on it a mail boot from a suit of armor. And the records show that the family was established by a knight during the Crusades.

Q: Crusades would be about 1000, 1100.



SHINKMAN: 1000, 1100. Anyway, this guy lost his leg and so therefore was called, the German word for thigh I believe is schinken, like ham. And he was Schinkelman. And that devolved, or evolved into Schinkmann. One branch went east into Russia and became Tshinkman, with a "T" in front of it. We have a travel document from that member of the family. But Schinkelman became Schinkmann and then the second "n" in "mann" was dropped and the "c" between the "S" and the "h" was dropped.

Q: Do you want to talk a little bit about your father's early career?

SHINKMAN: Absolutely. He graduated from the University of Michigan, wanted to go to law school. He wrote for the daily school newspaper at the University of Michigan and enjoyed that work so much that I think perhaps his grades suffered. And he actually graduated a semester late. Mom always said it was just because he loved writing for the newspaper and did that more than cracking the books, which he should have done. He then went off to law school. Did that for one semester. Thought it was absolutely dreadful. Left. Worked in a department store in Grand Rapids. He had read Peter Whiffle, the novel by Carl Van Vechten, which had absolutely made him fall in love at a distance with France. So he worked for a year to save enough money to buy a round trip ticket on the first student package tour to Europe, which was going steerage class and it really was called that I believe on an ocean liner called the Saxonia. And he went over.

Stayed for a year in Paris, living on the Left Bank. And loved it so much that early on in his time there he started looking for a job. Couldn't find a job. His French wasn't that good, of course, at first. He had excellent German but did not have that good French. Came up to that one year anniversary when he had to ship back to the U.S. and sold his return ticket to another student in order to give him the money to live there a little longer to try and find a job. And in that period managed to find a job working for the Chicago Tribune. And went on to spend the next five or six years living in Paris and in London working on Fleet Street in what's now the Reuters' Building. I think it may have even been the Reuters' Building then working for the Chicago Tribune bureau. And ended up I believe as bureau chief in Paris or in London, I'm not sure which.

Q: On your mother's side?

SHINKMAN: Mother's side, I do know because I read some of the history just in the last month. There's a new book by a cousin of mine, Tony Benn, who was a prominent British politician for many years. My great, great grandfather was a Congregationalist minister in the north of England. His son, John Williams Benn the family name is Benn, B-E-N-started a small trade publication, I think it was for the furniture industry, called the Cabinet Maker. And from that magazine built up a small publishing company. And he was knighted for his work on exports, enabling or facilitating export of British products.



And so his son, my grandfather, Sir Ernest Benn, took over the company and really grew it into quite a large substantial company with its own building on Fleet Street. It was always told to me that it was the British equivalent of McGraw-Hill. It was about that size, about that complexion, doing business magazines, trade publications, reference books, directories, that sort of stuff. So my grandfather built it into quite a large company. His son, my uncle Glanvill became chairman and then in the early to mid 1980s it was bought by a larger British company called Exchange Telegraph, which was in its own time then bought by a larger British company called, I think, United Newspapers. And I think that's who now owns the publications. There were forty or fifty magazines that they published. Whether it still exists as Benn Brothers, I don't know, or whether it is just the magazines that go on.

Q: Your mother?

SHINKMAN: So my mother grew up in that family. She had gone to Rhodan, which was clearly then and I think still now the pre-eminent young women's schooljunior college I guess you would call it on the south coast of England. Sussex I think it is. She then did studies at the Sorbonne. She got what I think we would call an Associates degree. She then did charitable work in London. My grandfather had opened a youth hostel in the poor section of London's East End and mom did charitable work there. And then met my father.

Q: You were mentioning how your mother and father met?

SHINKMAN: They had met because and this is getting very arcane when my dad went over to Europe the first time, on the Saxonia, of course they were all packed into cabins on the lower decks of the ship. There were four of them in the cabin. And during the four or five days it took to cross the Atlantic, the students of course often became fast friends. One of dad's friends was the scion of a department store family, I believe out of Cincinnati, but I'm not sure about that. Durand Smith. And he had studied at Cambridge. And one of my mother's older brother Glanvill, whom I mentioned before also studied at Cambridge. And Glanvill and Durand Smith became friends. So when my father some years later moved from Paris to London, he and Durand Smith got an apartment together "digs" as you would call it in Cliffords' Inn, just off of Fleet Street.



And Durand Smith, my father's flatmate, knew Glanvill Benn and there was some big holiday party, Christmas party, whatever, at the Benn family residence in Surrey, in the countryside outside of London. Durand Smith was invited by his good friend from Cambridge, Glanvill Benn, to go to the party. And Glanvill also said, "why don't you bring your flatmate?" So my dad went along, met Glanvill's younger sister, who was my mom, and they formed a romantic attachment, which developed and he never moved quickly in these things over the course of ten years. They had met in about 1925 and he proposed to her in 1935 by cablegram. I don't know what the state of trans-Atlantic telephones was in 1935, but it wasn't great. And he sent her a telegram, said "will you marry me?" in better words than that. And she said "yes." And they were married in 1935 outside London in the countryside in Surrey southeast of London and then moved directly back New York City where dad was living at the time.

Q: And your father was working in New York City for the Tribune still?

SHINKMAN: No, he had left the Tribune when he came back and was working in broadcast journalism. He was doing news reporting and he was also a theater critic. Had a lifelong love of the theater. And I can't remember the station. I'm tempted to think WOR, but I'm not absolutely sure about that. But that's what he was doing.

Q: What happened during the war?

SHINKMAN: They got married in 35 and were living in New York at that time. Dad being older, he wasn't called into service in the Second World War. And he continued to work in New York. And then in 1942 he was asked to come to Washington. As I mentioned earlier, he was trilingual with English, French and German. And he was asked to come and run what I believe was called the Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service, now known as the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, or FBIS. And he would listen to German broadcast not classified military transmissions, but public broadcast and then translate them and interpret them for the government.

Q: So then, in your earliest memories, your father had a foreign service stance, didn't he?



SHINKMAN: He did indeed. He came down from New York to Washington in '42. They had a tiny apartment at that stage in Manhattan. They couldn't afford to give up the lease on the apartment. So mom and my two older brothers weren't born at the time, stayed in Manhattan and dad came down and stayed in a rooming house in Washington and did war work through to the end of the war. He then worked in local broadcasting in the Washington area until in 1951 he was asked by a good friend, Walter Robertson, one of the great names in USIA's history if dad would go to Vienna to be the press spokesman at the American legation. Austria was an occupied country. Vienna was an occupied city. So of course we didn't have an embassy because there was no government to have an embassy to. So we had what was called a legation. And dad was press spokesman at the American legation in Vienna. And of course we went with him.

In those days a wonderful anecdote the U.S. Government sent you abroad properly if you were in the Foreign Service. And we went first class, the five of us, my two older brothers and me and my mom and dad. I think we went over on the SS America of the United States, and came back on the SS Constitution of the American Export Lines. Salvador Dali was in first class with us also. Not that we got to know Salvador well, but my brother has a treasured signature of his on the dinner menu one night.

Q: I was on the United States and we came first class with the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. Really, we weren't all mixing and mingling, but at the same time . . .

SHINKMAN: But it was the appropriate way for diplomats representing the greatest country on earth to travel. And I think we still should travel first class by ship.

Q: You mentioned one little thing that was sort of interesting about your mother and father while you were in Austria, about your brother and his bike experience.

SHINKMAN: Well, Dad's status was interesting. At that stage I believe it doesn't still exist there was a category of foreign service officer called "foreign service limited reserve." And he came on with a clear understanding that he was being brought on to do a specific job. He was a foreign service officer, but he was a reservist, sort of like you have army reservists, which I was for twenty plus years. So he was a foreign service officer just for three years.

The American military ran the school system for military dependents in Vienna. And most of the American diplomatic community went to those schools. But my brother was a very bright guy. At this stage, this would be 1951, he was fifteen and needed to be getting ready for college. And mom and dad thought that the academic standards at the American dependents school were not perhaps as rigorous as they would have liked. So, since he knew French, they sent him to the Lycée Français in Vienna. And he had two very good years there, which ultimately sent him off to Harvard.



But one interesting anecdote which I was recalling earlier is that, as I say, it was a very tense time in Vienna. And it really was Harry Lime and the Third Man, all that sort of thing. I was blissfully unaware of all that being 8, 9 years old. But listening to my mom and dad years later after we came back, it really was a pretty tense place. For my brother, of course, all his friends were other students at the French Lycée. And the French traveled much more easily into the Soviet zone of Austria and of Vienna than did Americans, because it was a pretty chilly time in relations. So when Paul's classmates would go off on bicycle trips into the Russian Zone, he'd always ask to go along and it was very hard for mom and dad to say "no, you can't go with . . .". You know, all parents resist "everyone's going" plea that to a certain extent, but in this case it just wasn't possible. So he'd go off. The border between the French Zone and the Russian Zone wasn't nearly as tightly controlled as between the American Zone and the Russian Zone. So the kids would just be waved through. And Paul would go through as just one of a bunch of French kids. And mom and dad would sit there with their hearts in their mouths, worrying that he was going to be discovered and without being melodramatically disappear and be gone, until he came back three hours later and was safely back in the French, British or American Zones and they would sort of collapse. Again, all this I was blissfully unaware of, playing in the back garden or whatever. But it was a tense time for them.

Q: Well I think you want to stop now.

SHINKMAN: If that's all right.

Q: Sure. And we'll put where we are. We are really going to pick up when you came back to the United States and where you lived and your experiences in early schooling, and we'll just keep moving up.

SHINKMAN: Okay. (break)

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Q: Today is the 8th of December 2004. When you came back from Vienna, whither?

SHINKMAN: We moved back into our house off Bradley Boulevard in Bethesda. I had done third and fourth grade in Austria. I'm trying to think whether I mentioned the British school in Austria. Did I mention that?

Q: I think we did, but tell us a little more . . .



SHINKMAN: Well I'll mention this because it's sort of funny. We moved down to Graz for my dad to open the Amerika Haus in Graz. Graz was in the British Zone in Austria, and so the only schooling for me was a tiny little British army dependents school of about twenty or thirty students in all grades from kindergarten through junior high school, I think. It was run by a rather fierce woman, Ms. Connelly. And two anecdotes from that time stick in my mind.

One is that caning was very much in fashion in those days. And I came shockingly close to being caned one day for playing some relatively innocent game, not paying attention in class, or something like that. Of course they had to keep discipline because it was in a big old house. It wasn't a school. And so the kids had to pay attention to their studies. But I was goofing around a little bit with some other kid and he got caned and I didn't because I was brand new in the school and the headmistress sort of cut me a bit of slack. But it was as close as I came to the pretty foul practice of caning students.

The other thing was that on some day that was a holiday in the U.S. and I don't know what it would have been, maybe Memorial Day or something at lunchtime we all gathered together for lunch. Ms. Connelly came out with this dish. As I mentioned earlier, I think my nickname in those days was Bunny. And she announced to the dining room, "Bunny, you'll recognize this very American dish although none of the other students would." And so I looked at this thing. And it was in a flat sort of pie plate. It was maybe three eighths of an inch high. Sort of tan coating on something that was vaguely sort of beige underneath it. And I had to admit, "Sorry Ms. Connelly, I don't know what it is." Well of course, it was lemon meringue pie. About as far as from anything you or I would ever call lemon meringue pie, but anyway, it was a nice gesture on her part to try and do something American on this holiday.

So we come back home from Austria. We sailed back First Class courtesy of the U.S. Government, as diplomats should be able to travel in keeping with our stature in the world. We moved back into our house off Bradley Boulevard in Bethesda. I went to fifth and sixth grades at Bradley Elementary, which is not called that anymore. I think it's still a school. It may be called Bradley Hills Elementary. I went from there to junior high school, which was then seventh, eighth and ninth grade, at North Bethesda Junior High School, the first three years that it was open. It opened when I went there for the seventh grade. And then I went on to Walter Johnson Senior High School out in Rockville. Up until that time there had only been BC Bethesda Chevy Chase High School serving Bethesda, but we were marginally closer to Rockville, so when Walter Johnson opened in the fall of 1958 I went there for two years. And then my parents decided I was being lazy in school and if I was going to get into a good college I needed to work harder. So they sent me off to prep school at Saint Mark's School in Southborough, Massachusetts.

Q: What years were you in Montgomery County?



SHINKMAN: We came back from Austria in 1953 and I went off to boarding school in 1960.

Q: This was a time when Maryland was a southern state and was hit by the civil rights thing and all of that. How did that affect you all?

SHINKMAN: Well, I was fairly young to notice that sort of thing. My lasting impression coming back from Vienna was that I thought I'd had a really interesting experience, my family's very international background. And I thought naturally all of the friends I made in the neighborhood would be interested in this fascinating thing. Well of course, they could not have been less interested. All they wanted to know was who was on the Mickey Mouse Club that afternoon, that sort of thing. So I saved my "interesting" experience for other times and didn't get a lot of mileage out of it.

In terms of things like the period that America was going through, I didn't have much impression of that as a child that age. I remember we used to go to Glen Echo to the amusement park there regularly, because of the swimming at the Crystal Pool, I think it was called. And then at one stage we stopped as I remember my mother saying that there was an outbreak of polio.

Q: Well the vaccine came out about 55.

SHINKMAN: So it would have been around that time. Around that same time Glen Echo was integrated, but my parents would not have stopped going someplace because it was integrated. It just wasn't a big deal.

I also remember something I mentioned earlier perhaps, that I learned years later. When my parents moved into our neighborhood in Woodhaven, in 1944 or 45, there was a clause in the contract that said "you will not sell your house to a Jew." Well of course my parents said "that's crazy. We're not going to sign anything like that." My father grew up a Roman Catholic but was converted to the Anglican church by my mother and we've been stout Episcopalians for years. Of course that exclusionary clause was crossed out of the contract and my parents did buy the house. But it was one of those odd little things that used to happen, but had stopped happening by the time my parents bought their house.

Q: How about at Walter Johnson? Did that get hit by integration?



SHINKMAN: Not that I noticed. We had some black students there. The ones I remember more than the blacks were a family of American Indians. And I thought they were the most interesting people. I recall a big massive guy who looked like what you and I might consider stereotypical; tall broad features in his face. Nice, nice guy. There were some blacks at WJ, but it wasn't a big issue.

Q: While you were in high school, before we go to prep school, what subjects interested you?

SHINKMAN: Math and English were the two subjects that I was fondest of. I was never a great scholar. Well, my wife always says I say that and she insists it's not true. But, yes, math and English were my favorites. I was President of the Math Club at Walter Johnson at one stage. Played some chess and pastimes like that.

Q: Did the outside world intrude much? The Cold War, developments abroad?

SHINKMAN: I don't think so. We followed events I suppose in the UK fairly closely because my mother had been born British. And discussed current events around the dinner table because dad was a newspaperman. But nothing that really jumps off the page at me.

Q: Then Saint Mark's, you were there for two years?

SHINKMAN: I went there for two years. Repeated eleventh grade and did twelfth grade there.

Q: What years were those?

SHINKMAN: That was 1960 to 1962.

Q: Did you by chance get involved at all in the Nixon-Kennedy campaign in 1960? Did that engage your . . . ?

SHINKMAN: No. I guess I wasn't really politically aware. It wasn't really until I got to Dartmouth that I started having an interest in presidential races and that sort of stuff.

Q: Saint Mark's. What was Saint Mark's like when you were there?



SHINKMAN: Small New England prep school. There is a group of about six of them that are known collectively apparently as Saint Grottlesex, which are Saint Paul's, Saint Mark's, Middlesex, Groton, two others...

Q: Andover?

SHINKMAN: Well Andover is a lot bigger. These are small schools. I think the total student body for six grades was 240. No I think it was even smaller than that. Somewhere around those numbers. A couple hundred students for secondary school, everything above elementary school. So it was a small school. It was just a boys school at that stage. Most of the kids were from the Northeastern United States. My first year there I roomed with a Mexican boy who came from a well-to-do Mexican family. I think we had an exchange student from Germany. But most of them were just kids from families in New England.

Q: And how did you find the education there?

SHINKMAN: Well it was a first rate education. It was markedly different. Very small classes. You know, five, six, seven students, this sort of stuff. Excellent teaching staff. And I think I enjoyed the procedure. Very much the world of J.D. Salinger's Holden Caulfield.

A lot of the kids had been there of course for their whole six years of secondary school. So they had formed long-term alliances. But I remember feeling very privileged that I was able to go there. I remember one particular dait's funny the things that stick in your minbut I was manager of the football team. St. Mark's is in Southborough, a spectacular setting in rural Massachusetts, a really beautiful setting, among streams and ponds. Very Walden and that sort of geography. The school has beautiful buildings, and is about 150 years old. I can remember one day it struck me, "you really are very, very lucky to be in this idyllic setting getting such a great education." That was kind of an interesting stage. I was probably 17 at the time.

Q: What were you pointed towards in '62 when you got out?

SHINKMAN: Well, I think again that math and English were the subjects that most interested me. And so when I went to Dartmouth, I had the intention of majoring in math. Dartmouth at that stage was on a trimester system, and I was a math major for about two trimesters in my freshman year. You didn't have to declare your major until, I think, the end of your sophomore year. It was a lenient process. But I had math in mind and focused on math courses for maybe my first two trimesters there. And quickly got into theoretical math which I did not enjoy nearly as much as practical math. So I said, this is not for me. What's a logical career move here? I thought, well, economics, that's something.



So I did economics for a couple of trimesters and found that subject to be deadly dull, as they say, the dismal science. And I found it dismal. So it seemed sensible then to go into English because I had always enjoyed English, enjoyed reading and writing. A very literary family. So I was an English major and graduated from Dartmouth in English.

Q: Any particular area of English literature that you particularly liked?

SHINKMAN: No, I don't think so. Nothing that sticks in my mind. I just enjoyed reading and studying. The thing I most enjoyed at Dartmouth - and again I may have mentioned earlier that my dad always said that his studies at the University of Michigan suffered because he enjoyed writing for the daily newspaper there so much he probably devoted too much time to it similarly at Dartmouth I worked for the campus radio station, which was the only AM radio station in the United States owned and operated by students. And I really, really enjoyed that a lot. I did live programming either with music or news reporting or whatever was needed. I really enjoyed that and probably spent too much time up at the radio station and not enough time in my room hitting the books or in the library.

Q: Where did you go for recreation? I always think of "Dartmouth is in town again. Run girls, run!"

SHINKMAN: Well I had a car. I had bought a car the Christmas of my freshman year. No. You couldn't have car your freshman year at Dartmouth, I believe, so I think it must have been the following summer. But there were other schools. Dartmouth was a single sex school at that stage and so we would do road trips on the weekends to Skidmore and to Smith and Holyoke and places like that. And of course there were organized events. At places like Dartmouth, which is fairly remote, they organize an awful lot of events on campus because they know there's not a lot of other stuff to do around there. So we led a fairly active life. But it is out in the wilds of New Hampshire. And again, a spectacular location. And a very, very good education. First rate.

Q: What about world affairs while you were there?

SHINKMAN: Just thinking off the top of my head, of course Kennedy was assassinated while I was there. I remember that. I remember where I was, as everyone does. I was in the stacks at Baker Library at Dartmouth when someone came through and I rushed over to the radio station to watch the reporting coming in. Nelson Rockefeller came through. I remember going to one of his campaign speeches. He and Happy came through because he was campaigning for what would have been the '64 elections.



Q: Yeah. It would have been for '64.

SHINKMAN: I remember that event. I had been reporting for the 1964 presidential primary in a remote corner of New Hampshire. The big three networks each had a different way of covering the national elections in all the tiny little hamlets around New Hampshire and the way ABC did it was to hire college kids and pay them 25 dollars to wait there until the results came in and then phone them in to ABC. I was assigned I've still got all my paperwork at home to some little hamlet like Dixville Notch. And I went there and there were few enough voters that they would do balloting and counting at midnight. It was voting day. They would all come in, cast their votes and the whole thing would be done by 12:15 [AM] on election day. Well, I got this place. It was very snowy. And one of the other networks I can't remember which one had been rather more clever about it and they had hired as reporters the spouses of the town clerks. So when the results were announced there was of course one phone line in that building who was going to get use of that phone line? Was it going to be the smart-alecky college kid who'd come in two hours before and was leaving and would never come back? Or was it going to be Jed's wife, who we see every day down at the general store? So of course Jed's wife got the phone and scooped ABC for whichever network she represented. I did phone in the results. But I cannot remember what they were. I've got it written down at home.

Q: During the time you were at Dartmouth, did the student body get involved all in the civil rights movement?

SHINKMAN: Certainly there was some of that. And it was a mixed student body. But it was still pretty much largely people who look like you and me. There was a small black community. There was a small group of students, both African Americans and non-African Americans, who were involved in the civil rights movement. But it wasn't a major presence, as I recall. There weren't many protests.

What I do recall is that I joined ROTC my freshman year. And every Wednesday afternoon this is '62 to '66 we would get in our uniforms and go out and drill on the college green in the middle of Dartmouth there in Hanover. And then my junior and senior year, '64-'65 and '65-'66, we started getting regular small, but noticeable, protests each Wednesday. We'd be out there marching around. The protesters wouldn't try and interfere with us, but there would be a line of people with placards or something. It was polite. It wasn't violent. People didn't throw things, call us baby killers, whatever, but there was that presence. But this was a time as I say, I graduated in '66 the war was still ramping up then. It really didn't get hot until later that year and '67, '68 and '69, when I went to Vietnam.



Q: Talking about the study of English. You know today, we are in the era of deconstructionism. I mean if you are taking English you are almost taking gender studies and looking at it and trying to come up with a different angle. How were you studying English when you were there?

SHINKMAN: I don't think those sorts of issues really had come up yet. Again, it was a male college. That doesn't mean you wouldn't have gender studies. But it wasn't a natural topic for discussion. I remember the academic environment being pretty conventional, what a lot of people today would call the study of "dead white males from western Europe". I found that very pleasant and . . .

Q: Good writers.

SHINKMAN: Yes. They are not around for 400 years by coincidence, you know.

Q: Was the military in the offing when you graduated?

SHINKMAN: Yes. I'd been in ROTC. My son once asked me what prompted me to go into ROTC. My oldest brother had done ROTC at Harvard and graduated as a Second Lieutenant. He was a medical researcher and after he got his graduate degree had gone off and done a couple of years of research in whatever his chosen field was, paid for by the Army. And I thought, well that sounds like a good way to manage your life. So I went into ROTC and graduated and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant the summer of 1966. I took that summer off, and traveled to Europe to visit family and friends around the UK.

In the fall I went on active duty. I was sent on a series of training courses, Signal Officers Basic Course at Fort Gordon, Georgia, from September to November of '66. And then a radio officers course at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, from November '66 to March of '67. Then psychological operations officer's course at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, from March until August '67. That school had just opened. At that stage it was called the John F. Kennedy Center for Special Warfare, and the Special Forces were at Fort Bragg. My course was not part of the Special Forces, but there were many Special Forces officers who were there in the Psy-ops Officers Course. And I graduated. While I was there, as an additional duty, I ran a little local radio station for the base, for Fort Bragg. And then I went off to Vietnam in the fall of '67.

Q: You were in Vietnam from . . . ?

SHINKMAN: September '67 to September '68.



Q: What outfit?

SHINKMAN: I was with the 54th Signal Battalion. I was a radio platoon leader and assistant platoon leader. The 54th was in a city called Nha Trang, on the coast of South Vietnam. There was a major headquarters there called First Field Forces Vietnam, IFFV, and it had its own signal unit to support its needs, and that was us, the 54th Signal Battalion.

It was an interesting assignment. Of course, being in Vietnam was an experience in itself. Since this was a very senior headquarters, we provided the communications from headquarters to all the other major sub-headquarters, the division headquarters around this area.

Q: This is II Corps?

SHINKMAN: Yes. The II Corps area. So I had detachments of my radio platoon at the headquarters of these various units all around II Corps, which was wonderful because it enabled me to travel to all those places. So I actually saw quite a bit of South Vietnam, which I found fascinating.

Q: Did you get out to the highlands, at all?

SHINKMAN: Yeah. Got out to Pleiku and An Khe and Dalat, and some of the other places.

Q: Dalat is very nice.

SHINKMAN: Gorgeous. Absolutely gorgeous. It's a beautiful country.

Q: A Swiss village in the middle of . . .

SHINKMAN: Well it is. Yes. Did you spend a lot of time in Vietnam?

Q: No. About 18 months.

SHINKMAN: As a Foreign Service Officer?

Q: Yes. I was consul general in Saigon. '69-'70.



SHINKMAN: Really. Wow. Difficult time.

Q: Well not really. Where were you and what happened at Tet?

SHINKMAN: Always full of anecdotes, the family says. I was actually duty officer that night. The IFFV headquarters were in a big hotel on the coast. And I can remember that night I was at the headquarters, in the building. And at midnight I went up on the roof - it was maybe a four story building or something like that just to look out over the city of Nha Trang, which is quite a large city.

And I always remembered two things about it. One is that for the Vietnamese, like many countries, one way to celebrate a holiday is to have a weapon and shoot it into the air. And I can remember seeing lots of tracer bullets shooting up into the air at midnight as Tet started. And then the tracers seemed to stop going up. And the angle of fire seemed to become more horizontal. And that started the Tet offensive.

My role as duty officer although it may initially sound like it was very challenging simply meant that, since this was obviously such a big event, I just called everybody and everybody came in, from the corps commander on down. So I basically sat there and watched all these people. But it was a somewhat hair-raising event.

Q: What happened in Nha Trang?

SHINKMAN: Well they didn't come all the way into the city. But there was a lot of firing, lot of fighting, on the outskirts of the city. Nha Trang being a corps headquarters city, was pretty well defended. So as I recall, there wasn't a lot of hand-to-hand, house-to-house, fighting in the streets of Nha Trang. It was pretty much out on the outskirts. And there was a big airbase there also, which again was well defended.

Q: While you were there, what were you and your fellow officers talking about what we were doing in Vietnam?



SHINKMAN: I think it's a good question. And I think about it fairly often. But again, when you are in the middle of it, whether it's because it was the time it wa'67, '68 - or whether its because of where we were in Vietnawe weren't out walking through rice paddies with water up to our armpits holding our rifles over our heads, it wasn't that kind of war in our locatiowe didn't spend a lot of time agonizing over why we were there and what was going on. If you were in the army, the army said "go to place X," you went to place X and you did your job. There wasn't a lot of discussion. I think we were aware of the protests back in the states. But again it was '68 when those were more protests. As always, there were people who were going to be disgruntled about being there, but not for political reasons.

But one of the great things about being in the Signal Corps is that you are operating electrical equipment that always must be kept at an even temperature. So whether you are in military bunkers or huts on the backs of deuce-and-a-half trucks, they are going to be air conditioned. And where you've got the power to run an air conditioner, you can run a little Sanyo electric refrigerator. So I wouldn't say life was cushwe were in the middle of a war zonbut as I said we were not out wading through rice paddies with our rifles over our heads. So there wasn't a lot of disgruntlement on that score.

There was some drug usage. I always wondered whether I was aware of it at the time as much as I am in retrospect. But nothing traumatic. I think a few of the troops in my unit probably smoked pot from time to time on the night shift. But it wasn't anything rampant.

Q: What about the units up in the highlands and other places? How did they fair during the Tet offensive?

SHINKMAN: Well I'm not sure. I haven't talked to them that much. My units, my detachments, were all at major headquarters. They were all at division headquarters. At the headquarters of various divisions in the corps area. So again, they were in well defended situations. The people up in Pleiku and An Khe lived in places with sandbagwell we all lived in places with sandbags all around thebut faced a more real threat from live fire and from grenades than we did down in Nha Trang. But as you know as well as I do, there wasn't a front line in Vietnam. The war was everywhere. So you were open to that sort of attack anywhere. But again, given that it was a war zone, and a hot war zone, our situation was better than it was for a lot of infantry soldiers.

Q: Did you get at all involved with AFRTS?



SHINKMAN: Well I have another armed forces anecdote. AFRTS had a little retransmitter on the roof of the hotel the same place that I mentioned from which I watched the Tet offensive. And because we were the radio platoon for military communications, that AFRTS retransmitter also came under our purview. It was not a broadcast studio or anything. It was just a retransmitter. It received a signal and rebroadcast it around the Nha Trang area. And one night not the Tet offensive I remember we were having trouble with our telecommunications, our teletype machines, connecting with one of our locations. And it became clear that interference was coming from this AFRTS retransmitter. So I turned it off. Well the next morning I got reamed out by my commanding officer who said I had my priorities all wrong because I had tried to maintain military communications by canceling something that I thought was very good for the troops but really in terms of the war effort was marginal. He thought that the bad publicity from cutting off AFRTS was not something I should have taken so lightly. But that was my only connection with AFRTS. I never met Adrian Cronauer or any of those people.

Q: You left there in '68. Was that the end of your tour?

SHINKMAN: Yes. I was there almost exactly a year. A week short of a year, something like that.

Q: So what happened next?

SHINKMAN: I came back to the States. While I was in Vietnam, I had been thinking for the previous year about what I wanted to do. And so I got off of active duty. I had no intention of staying on active duty. And through family connections with a publishing company on Fleet Street, I was offered a job on Fleet Street. And I thought, gee, those times I've been to the UK before I really liked it. And probably not least because my father had done a similar thing, I thought, great, I'll go to the UK for a year.

So I was offered a job for just one year at a publishing house on Fleet Street, and went over in October in '68 with the intention of staying just one year and coming back to the States. And I just enjoyed living in London so much, I ended up staying there for eight years.

Q: How about significant others?



SHINKMAN: While I was there, we got very early models of word processing equipment, made by IBM. They were called "mag card readers." They use magnetic cards (four by eight or something?), you stick them in a machine and it will make a copy of something you have typed and then type it back out for you. And so the company acquired lots of this equipment and at that stage IBI guess they do it today, to when a company placed a major order for their equipment, they would send IBM staff to train everybody in the company how to use this stuff. So an attractive young woman came from IBM to teach us all. And I thought "hello, hello." She and I became good friends and somehow I managed to get her a permanent position in our company. She left IBM and came to work for Benn Brothers. We started going out and got married a year or two later.

Q: While you were there, what sort of work were you doing?

SHINKMAN: The full gamut of stuff. I started off working for a weekly news magazine called Chemical Age, a magazine for the chemical manufacturing industry, the DuPonts, the Dows, the ICI's and companies like that. And I did reporting as a junior reporter for that. After I had done that for a year or two, they thought it would be useful for me to get some advertising sales experience to broaden my understanding of publishing. I did that for a few years. And then towards the end, my last three years, I was made a publisher and given a group of publications that I ran, both reference works and magazines. And I did that.

Q: How did you find the publishing world in that area?

SHINKMAN: I thought it was fascinating. I thought it was really interesting. Probably the least interesting work I did was the selling of advertising space which, in the trade industry, is a pretty hard slog. Not that I had really hard work, but it just wasn't terribly rewarding work. But I found the publishing industry very interesting and in those days, of course, content was still set with hot metal. They had linotype machines. It wasn't individual pieces of type. But you went down to the printer on Thursday - the night that the magazine went to press and you read proofs as they came off after the type had been set in hot metal on the linotype machine. You were really involved in all aspects of the production of magazines and reference works. So I enjoyed it.

It was a pleasant life. I was paid a pathetic salary, but it gave me enough to live on. And I had a modest apartment with a cousin which we shared in Earl's Court. And then moved into a classic sort of late-'60s, early-'70s set up in a very nice row house in Central London, where I shared a house with four other people, two men and two women. It was just a very pleasant relationship. And we had a nice house. I lived there for three or four years before my wife and I got married and bought a house in Fulham in Southwest London.



Q: I always think of some of the battle I'm not sure when it happened but with Murdock and the press. As an American, how did you observe, they call it "class conflict," particularly within a business?

SHINKMAN: Well the class system then and I think probably now is just really entrenched in the UK as it is in many places. I think in France, although they don't carry titles, there is still very much that sentiment that there are people who are inherently more important because of their family background and that sort of thing. But it was very evident in the U.K. It could be very frustrating at times. I think there is less of that now than there was then.

It was a time of considerable labor strife. The publishers had not yet taken on the unions on Fleet Street, but there was still extraordinary feather-bedding. All the major publishers were still right there on Fleet Street. There was, however, the garbage strike that went on for something like three months. And I can remember driving around Berkeley Square, one of the most beautiful squares in London, and it was piled six feet high with garbage bags. The whole area. There were some pretty tough times. Harold Wilson was the prime minister. There were some very difficult labor problems.

Q: Did you get involved as your responsibility?

SHINKMAN: No, not really, because we were in business publishing. So those sorts of events didn't really come to my attention. Occasionally people would approach me for comments, knowing I was a Vietnam veteran, about anti-war protests. And of course I had nothing to do with the American embassy, so I rarely went to Grosvenor Square where the American embassy is. There were major protests there for days on end. But I rarely had anything particularly interesting to say about it. I can remember a daily newspaper calling me once and saying what did I think about all the protests about the war. And I said I thought it was reasonable that they protest. I might disagree with them. So I didn't provide anything they wanted to print. I just wasn't very controversial.

Q: Did you sense a feeling of anti-Americanism at all?



SHINKMAN: I don't think so. There was strong anti-war sentiment. I think anti-Americanism in the UK I think because I've now lived there for fairly long stretches at a couple of times has not changed very much. There are certain relatively small segments, the British upper class, who can't get over the fact that the British are no longer running the world and resent the fact that we are the predominant military, political, cultural power in the world. And so they are going to be anti-American or resentful. But I think the majority of people who are in a position to know what is going on admire the United States. They may not approve of everything and think we are a bit rough-edged and should be a little bit smoother about things. But I think there is more admiration in the UK. Even at all levels, I think, even in the working class levels, if you call them that. It is probably not polite to call it that anymore, but from the shop floor up to the boardroom I think you still find great admiration for the United States.

Q: You really hadn't had any real experience in American business. As you watched business being conducted, did you see things you thought were outdated or not the way you thought they should be done?

SHINKMAN: I think you put your finger on it. I really didn't have that much experience in the American corporate world to be able to make a comparison. I know I thought various of the procedures were pretty archaic. The amount of deference that you had to show to people above you in the chain of command seemed to me a bit excessive. I remember I used to get my payslip every two weeks. It was written in longhand with a fountain pen by somebody in the accounts department. I thought, they have got to be able to do better than that. This was 1968, 1969. They could have typed it or something. But you know, fairly old procedures.

Q: Was a lot of business conducted in the boardroom? I'm exaggerating . . .

SHINKMAN: Yes. There was very much that sort of thing for major items. The members of the board of directors had their own bathroom on their floor of the building. The tea lady came around every morning and every afternoon and served tea. We got our tea in modest mugs and occasionally you would see the Board's tea going on a silver salver and nice tablecloth on the little tea trolley, and that sort of stuff. So yes, there was some of that. And I suppose half of the board were people who had titles. They would be, "Sir John" this and "Sir Edward" that. So there wasn't easy upward mobility. And I think a lot of Brits admired that in American business there generally was a lot more mobility.

Q: Were you keeping an eye on American publications?



SHINKMAN: To a certain extent. I would read them. I would come back to the States once a year. The company was kind enough, generous enough, to send me on a business trip and I would spend a week around Thanksgiving or Christmas in New York calling on clients that we had, companies which advertised in our publications, who were based in New York, and then I would come down to Washington to spend the holiday with family. So I kept an eye on U.S. media. And they looked a little smarter, a little sharper, a little more smoothly produced, a little more up-to-date than our publications did. But we published some very good magazines and people wanted to buy them. It was a prosperous little company, so we seemed to be doing things right. And were pretty good at keeping up with technology as it existed in those days.

Q: And you did thus until . . .

SHINKMAN: '68 to '76. I had been in the UK for eight years. I married a Brit in '74. And I thought to myself, I need to make a fairly fundamental decision here. It became clear to me - a number of things came clear to me that no matter how long I stayed in the UK. I was still going to be an expatriate living there. Did I want to be an expatriate for the rest of my life? Did I want to re-establish my Americanism by going back to the States? And tied into this cultural thing that we've been talking about, it became clear to me that although I would reach a management level in the company, I would never in any wildest dreams be put on the main board of directors of such a stereotypically British company. They just wouldn't have an American on that board. Whereas there were other people who I thought were about of equal tenor may have even been, I dare say, of less talent than I had at that stage who were on the board of directors of the company.

So I thought, I think I do need to leave. And I thought, how can I do that and maintain this wonderful international lifestyle that I enjoy so thoroughly? So I wrote a letter to Henry Kissinger and said "Secretary Kissinger, how do I join your operation?" And got a very nice letter back from somebody in the personnel office of the State Department saying, "well the first thing you do is take this thing called the Foreign Service exam."

So I took it while I was still living in the UK. At the end of 1975, I came home for I think in those days, wasn't the exam always given the first week of December? I think it was. I came back for Thanksgiving. Although the exam was offered at the American Embassy in London, I took it here in Washington D.C. in December of 1975. And then learned in the spring that I had passed the written exam.



We moved back to the States in the summer of '76. We decided to treat ourselves and crossed the Atlantic on the QE2. And because my wife was in fact emigrating to the U.S., she got one of these wonderful (relatively small) discounts that British carriers still give to people emigrating from the UK. If you emigrate to Australia, New Zealand, the United States, or Canada I suppose, you get a discount as an emigrant. So she got ten percent off her fare on the QE2 as I recall. And we came back the summer of '76.

I took the oral exam in August of '76. Passed that.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions?

SHINKMAN: Yes. You know what I did waand I can't remember why I did il think it was my wife's idea. As soon as I got home from the oral exam, I sat down with a tape recorder almost identical to yours and recounted every question I could remember and every answer I could remember. And I've got that cassette at home. So I should listen to it and refresh my memory.

But the one that sticks in my mind was they asked "what do you consider America's major cultural contribution to world culture." And I said I thought the American musical-Oklaohoma, Carousel, those certain things have always been very close to my heart, music I absolutely adorththe American musical. I thought was unique enough that it could stand by itself as an American contribution to world culture. They seemed pleased with that. And I remember almost getting the datl've never been a historiaalmost getting the date of the Great Depression wrong in one of my answers. But I did manage to quickly catch myself and say that the Great Depression was in 1929 and not 1939. Other than that, I don't remember what the questions were.

Q: At that time, were they looking at you to be a specialist or something?

SHINKMAN: No, it was to be a Foreign Service Officer. But at that stage there was a separate category. Instead of being an FSO, you were an FSIO, which was a Foreign Service Information Officer. FSOs who worked for the USIA were called FSIOs. You took a slightly different written exam. There was an essay portion, which there was not for FSOs, which I always thought was kind of a cheat. I thought FSOs got off easier than we did. But it was an interesting exercise. And I did apply because I thought, looking at the various types of Foreign Service Officers you could be, it seemed to me that a Foreign Service Information Officer was what I would most like to be.

So I joined. Again - and I guess it's not that much different today - I passed the oral exam in the late summer of '76 and was not offered a position until February of '78, so it was almost 18 months. It may have been 17 months.



Q: What did you do in the meantime?

SHINKMAN: It was interesting. I did temporary work around Washington. And I really did temporary work. I went to work for a large temporary personnel agency called Manpower. I applied sort of half-heartedly for a couple of permanent positions, but I thought I can't take a job without letting prospective employers know that when I'm accepted in the Foreign Service, that's what I'm going to do. I thought, that's only fair to them. And of course you aren't going to get many permanent positions if people think you may be up and out in a few months time. So I did temporary work, working in offices around Washington, large and small.

And after about six months of that I was sent to a small consultancy, a company of maybe a dozen employees, 15 employees, run by a Hispanic woman. A typical little Washington consultancy. The proprietor's specialty was doing work on bilingual education, and whether American school systems should let kids study in Spanish. And we got along well. I went as a temporary fill-in for somebody who wasn't there for a few days being sick, and the proprietor, Lourdes Miranda, hired me to stay on, and I worked for her for the best part of a year. And that was an interesting experience. It was my first real experience with dealing with the federal government. For instance, she survived on contracts with I guess what would have been HEW at that stage, Health, Education and Welfare, wasn't it? So I worked for that firm after having done temporary work. My wife went to work for Arthur Anderson, one of the big accounting firms while we were here.

Q: When did you come into the Foreign Service?

SHINKMAN: I came into the Foreign Service in February of 1978. Almost exactly the same time as they changed the name of the U.S. Information Agency to the U.S. International Communication Agency, which caused misunderstanding everywhere in the world.

Q: Oh, CIA.

SHINKMAN: Well that was it. Just as there was the U.S. Agency for International Development, they were going to call it the U.S. Agency for International Communication, which would have been AIC. But stick that in a mirror and it's CIA and so on and . . . spies and whatever. So they called it ICA. No one I met during the years it was ICA other than we employees at the agency had any idea what the initials meant.

Q: I was in Korea at the time and I remember it came around, but I can't recall anybody really talking about it.



SHINKMAN: Well not much. I mean, we stayed USIS abroad. And of course USIS is a phrase that today - five years after USIA has gone out of existence - people all over the world are still comfortable with using. So we were USIS abroad and as soon as Charlie Wick came in as director of USICA he changed it back to USIA. But we were USICA for a couple of years.

Q: When you came in in '78, how did they train you?

SHINKMAN: It was excellent training. It really was something that obviously should be replicated today, I believe. We had training in Washington for six months. Basic public diplomacy and diplomacy training. But when you went out on your first JO touwe were called JOTs, junior officer trainee you spent a month in each of the other cones. To apply for our first assignment, we were given a list of possible posts which we could rank order according to our preferences. I think there were 15 posts on the list and I came up with what I thought were very good arguments for why I should go to London or Rome or someplace like that. In the event, I got assigned to my 11th choice, which was Accra, Ghana, which turned out to be a fabulous assignment. We've loved all our assignments so I don't rank them. But if I had to, Ghana would be right there at the top. We just had a fabulous time. But to get back to training, USIA sent you off to a post, and then you did a whole month in the political section, and a whole month in the consular section, a whole month in econ and a whole month in admin. So you really got a feel for what the other sections of an embassy did. And the consular section was very small at the embassy in Accra.

There was one consular officer, who was the consul, David Lyon, who is now chief of mission in Suva, Fiji. And we've been friends since then. But I arrived in his section as fresh meahe had not been able to travel outside the capital because he was the only American consular officer therimmediately after my arrival, he jumped on a plane or took the car or whatever and traveled all over northern Ghana. And I sat there as acting consul for a month. No, he wasn't gone a whole month, for a couple of weeks. It was probably some of the most strenuous work I have ever done in the Foreign Service. Interviewing people. We had non-immigrant visa applications every morning for three hours, I guess 9-12, something like that, five days a week. And doing those interviews it is what everyone who has done consular work knowwas just exhausting.



And Ghana was in terrible economic difficulties at that time; people were desperate to get out. So there was an enormous volume of applications for non-immigrant visas. A large amount of cheating. It gave me a lifelong respect for our consular colleagues and how important the consular function is to the U.S. to our culture, our society and certainly to our government. The hard thing, as I recall, was knowing that when these people came to the window, you had the power to change their lives. If you said, "yes, you can go to the U.S.", people stood a great chance of their economic fortunes blossoming. But if they stayed in Accra, their prospects were much less promising. And so given that and given the large amount of falsification of documents, trying to keep your mind clear, judging each person . . . you had to clean the slate, not pre-judge them, and interview them. And it was hard, hard work. It really was. But I found it enormously rewarding and, as I said, it gave me a lifelong respect for the importance of the work our consular colleagues do.

Q: Who was the ambassador at the time?

SHINKMAN: We had two ambassadors. As a JO, I didn't spend much time with them. They were both named Smith. This was just after Shirley Temple had left. She was enormously popular as ambassador.

Q: She had done a very good job.

SHINKMAN: Very good job. But she left and we had a couple of Smiths. One of them was Robert Smith and I can't remember what the second Smith's name was.

Q: There was a Thomas S. Smith and some other Smith. I can't remember.

SHINKMAN: Maybe the other one was Thomas. But Robert was the one I remember. My wife and I got to know the DCM and his wife more, who was very kind to us. They live near us out on Massachusetts Avenue. I haven't seen them for years, but I see their names in the little phone directory for our neighborhood. Ed and Mary Holmes.



We had a delightful tour in Ghana. We traveled a certain amount. We got to the Cote D'Ivoire. We got to Togo. We didn't get as far as Nigeria, which I wanted to. But we drove around a lot. Ghanians are just wonderful, wonderful people. We loved the country, loved the people, loved the culture. But they were in terrible economic straits. About once a month we would drive to Lome, Togo, immediately to the east - which I think is a two or three hour drive over pretty rough roads - just to go to a country where they had fresh food. And they had big tourist hotels there. There were jumbo jets full of French and German tourists coming down. We would take a cooler with us, a large cooler in the car, and come back with cheeses and French bread and things like that. But as I say, Accra was a fabulous assignment. And we have Ghanaian friends to this day. We were there just one year '78, '79.

Another interesting aspect: you asked about training. USIA was very thoughtful. In those days, before you could be tenured, you had to get off of language probation. So they sent me even knowing that I was going to an English-speaking country they sent me to a French language brush up course for 12 weeks so that I could get my 3/3 in French and get off language probation before I went to my first assignment. So I was tenured - in those days the procedure was common was tenured before I went to my first assignment.

Q: Were there any unrest or any problems in Ghana when you were there?

SHINKMAN: Well, there were indeed. They had the first violent revolution in the history of the country. They were the first country in Africa to gain its independence. And Ghana's first leader, Kwame Nkrumah, had a very Socialist orientation and it not surprisingly didn't really work. So, the country went downhill and was taken over by generals. And they had panels of generals who would run the country. And they would run the country for a few years and then get increasingly corrupt. And the leader would be told politely by another phalanx of generals "it's time for you to go. Please leave." And then some new generals would come in.

Well in the summer of 1979 there was an uprising in the military lead by a guy called Flight Lieutenant (pronounced "Flight Left Tenant" due to the country's British connection) Jerry Rawlings. Flight Lieutenant is equivalent to a Captain in our Air Force. Not a high ranking officer. And he led a revolution of junior officers and enlisted men. And they took over the country.

I remember many things. It was a very exciting time. How many people get to live through a revolution? But one of the things that struck me then was how easy it is to take over a country. The revolutionaries took over the airport, the Ministry of Defense, the equivalent of the White House - where the general who was in charge, was chief executive of the country, live and of course took over the military bases by having all the enlisted troops and junior officers on their side. It really didn't take long and they had the country in a matter of 24 hours.



We lived in a diplomatic enclave half way between the international airport and downtown Accra. And adjacent to the international airport was the major university, Legon. During that day, we would watch a helicopter flying back and forth over our house. And it was Jerry Rawlings going to talk to the students at the university to make sure they were on board with this revolution, and then going back downtown to be in charge of the fight to take over the TV station, the airport and the military headquarters downtown. But the insurgents had the country in not much more than 24 hours.

The end of the second day, they went on national television. I will always remember that. I took still photographs of the TV screen because it was so interesting. And I tape recorded on audio tape the broadcast. But here was this array of people in military uniform. In ranliterallfrom privates to the most senior being Jerry Rawlings, a Captain in the Air Force. No two uniforms at the table matched. There were people probably the Private couple of them with their heads down on their arms on the table. Perhaps even asleep. It was not an impressive array of strength or authority. But these guys ran the country, had taken over the country.

Our ambassador, Ambassador Smith, was extremely active all during this period, of course, and was very successful in talking to the new leaders and helping them to understand the consequences beyond those local to Accra: that you can't go out and shoot everybody that was here before. The international consequences of that would just be too great. You have to understand the consequences of now being in charge of this country.

The ambassador was not acting alone. Also with him were the British High Commissioner, who was very influential; and other ambassadors and high commissioners. In the whole coup, I think that less than six - maybe three or four generals, previous ruler were taken down to the beach, tied up against poles, and shot. And the fact that those three or four people were shot absolutely sent shock waves through the country. It was so un-Ghanaian. Now for an African coup or a coup in any other country, you often expect hundreds if not thousands of deaths in the process of a coup d'etat. In Ghana, to its credit, the fact that three or four people were killed was absolutely a shock to the country.

It was a very sophisticated country, a very culturally rich country. I can remember meeting Ghanaians who, not only had they gone to Oxford and Cambridge, but their grandparents had gone there. Think of a black West African in the early 1900s who can get to Oxford or Cambridge, he or she has got to be a pretty special person. It's a very rich culture. Very established culture. Very sophisticated people. And as I say, these very few regrettable deaths, but really very few in number, caused absolute shock waves across the country.



Rawlings then came in. He had some senior advisors among the students at Legon University the University of Ghana at Legon who were very left wing, some of whom had gotten their undergraduate degrees in Soviet bloc universities. And some of his economic policies really were very unfortunate and did not help the country. Ghana had a long struggle with the IMF, the World Bank. But now, apparently I have not been back to Ghana since we left in 1979, but we follow Ghanaian events they really are doing well and are one of the more prosperous countries in Africa. And now, just as we used to go to Togo for the weekend to stock up on fresh food and have a swim in the ocean and have an air conditioned hotel room, people now come from Togo and I suppose even more from the Ivory Coast to Ghana for the weekend to do that.

Q: You mentioned your Ghanaian friends. Was the United States at all seen as important, or was it mainly British?

SHINKMAN: Well I think both. I think almost of equal weight. The Brits because of the extraordinary historic links and the United States because of its position in the world. For any foreign diplomat that any of us has met from any country in the world, an assignment to Washington is the dream assignment. Even in the old Soviet bloc, unless they were idiots, they wanted to serve first in a Western country, but particularly in the United States. So I think there was great respect for the United States in Ghana. Some resentment, as I say, among left wing students. Again, you've had that in every country you've served in. I've certainly had it in every country I've served in. Sort of a fact of life and not something you get too excited about. But no, general respect for and affection for the United States.

Q: Did you get any feeling for U.S. information work?

SHINKMAN: Well, I was a junior officer. I was made an Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer in charge of the American Center, which was in its own compound. A library, multi-purpose room, we had speakers programs, a lot of the traditional things that USIS does in posts. And had a very active program. We traveled around the country, had visiting lecturers, and it was a lot of fun. It really was.



Some of the things I remember, again minor anecdotes from the revolution. As is often the case in countries like this, the waterfront in the capital is not terribly attractive. But Ghana is on the Gulf of Guinea. The whole expatriate community would drive every Sunday out to a beach about 30 miles east of Accra where they all had little cottages. When a new officer came in you would take over renting a little cottage for the year at a nominal cost. The Sunday after the revolution we had gone out to the beach for the day and we were coming back into Accra at about four or five in the afternoon. We came up on a long, long queue of cars. And the rebel force the new authorities, they were at that stage had set up a check point. I had diplomatic plates on the car and I was certainly too full of myself. I thought, I don't need to stay in this queue of cars. So I pulled out and went shooting up to the front of the line. And a soldier comes over and waves me down, says "where are you going?" I said "I'm going to the American embassy. I don't think we need to stop at your checkpoint." And he said "well you have to stop. If you hadn't stopped, I could have shot you." So again, being young and not very bright, I said to him "do you have any bullets in your gun?" And he said to me, "that's a secret." In retrospect it sort of makes my blood go cold. He was right, he could have shot me and would have got away with it completely. And it was not a very bright thing to do. But it's what I did.

And the other thing, we were in the house during the coup living below window level. As my wife recounts, that also happens to be the time we conceived our first child. There wasn't a lot to do at home. As I mentioned, we were in a diplomatic enclave where there were a lot of foreign businessmen and as is often the case in the developing world, when things start to go bad economically, everyone looks for a scapegoat. And it is usually the foreign businessmen, the Lebanese businessmen, the Pakistani businessmen, who are in fact keeping the economy running. But they are the target because they are living well it's easy to say "they are breaking down our economy." So a group of rebel soldiers in a big truck, like a deuce-and-a-half, came driving through the neighborhood looking for foreign businessmen to take off somewhere. I don't think they killed them in the end. But they did take them off for interrogation. And this was a little bit disconcerting.

But our gardener Al Hassan was out mowing the lawn with his hand mower when these guys came back. Things had quieted down a bit, and we were peering out the window. The truck comes roaring up and screeches to a halt in front of our gate. And the guys start talking to Al Hassan, and we don't know what they are talking about. Well what they were saying was "who lives in this house." And he said, "Oh, they're Americans and you don't need to worry about them." And the guys got back in their truck and drove off. So Al Hassan after that could do no wrong. He was not the greatest gardener in the world but, boy, we were sure going to keep him onboard.



The embassy had given us a letter, given everybody in the embassy a letter, that you stuck it in the window of your front door. It was on embassy letterhead and it said "these are diplomatic premises. You may not enter here without the permission of the U.S. embassy." And then there was a big red seal at the bottom. Everyone agreed that the text was meaningless but that when people saw that big red seal, that would probably stop them from coming into the house. And it did.

Q: While you were there, was there any concern about Soviet influence?

SHINKMAN: Not so much directly. I didn't get so much into the intelligence aspect of it, so I don't know how active the Soviets were. But there was a strong strain in the student body of students who had been educated in bloc universities because the Soviet Union gave enormous grants. As I understand it, it wasn't that difficult to get a grant of tuition to go to a university in Eastern Europe, so a lot of the graduate students in the Ghanaian universities had got their undergraduate degrees in the Soviet bloc. There was a definite influence there. But it was not something that I particularly was aware of.

The closest I came to anything approaching intelligence work, which was not intelligence work happened the day after the coup. Jerry Rawlings called a press conference at which he was going to meet the foreign press. Well, there were almost no foreign press in Ghana, but some had flown in for the event. And the embassy was very keen to have a representative in this press conference. So since I worked for USIA, we thought it wasn't completely implausible that I had a connection with the Voice of America. So I went in. I put myself down as a Voice of America correspondent, for whom I could have easily filed a report, and went and covered the press conference. I got back to the embassy and everybody wanted to know who was there? Where were they sitting? And who seemed to be in a position of authority? And that sort of thing. Having been, again, a junior officer, I wasn't intimately aware of the faces of all the senior people in the Ghanaian government. So I wasn't much help. But it was an interesting experience. And one of the things that struck me about it was, what a charismatic guy Jerry Rawlings was. It was like when I came in contact with the Pope, you just felt when you were in a room with him this charisma. He was a very attractive personality and you felt it.

Q: You left there in '79?

SHINKMAN: Left there in '79.

Q: Whither?



SHINKMAN: We went on direct transfer to the southern Philippines. At that stage we had an American Center on the island of Mindanao, in the far southern Philippines. It is the largest island or the second largest island in the Philippines. And the U.S. had an American Center. We did not have a consulate there. There was only one consulate outside Manila and that was in Cebu. We had an American Center there also. USIA had a USIS center in Cebu. And we had our USIS center in Davao, which is a very agricultural area. Davao was a big city of half a million people, but the island of Mindanao was pretty rough, mountainous, a lot of agriculture.

The reason we were down there, partly, was because there were a lot of big American business interests there. There were enormous plantations. Banana plantations. Pineapple plantations. And Dole, Del Monte and United Brands all had just gigantic operations down there. We were one of only three diplomatic entities on Mindanao. I had diplomatic status, but as I say it wasn't a consulate. There was the American presence, which was me. It was one American and I had eight FSNs.

The Japanese also had a diplomatic mission there, and the Indonesians had a large diplomatic presence which mostly consisted of consular officers because that part of the Philippines, lying near Indonesia, has historically been owned by Indonesia and by the Philippines. The island of Mindanao moved back and forth in ownership. And so there are a lot of people with Indonesian citizenship there. I think there were a dozen or 15 Indonesian diplomatic personnel at their mission there.

Q: What were you doing?

SHINKMAN: Well, I ran the American Center. It was a dream job for a young Foreign Service Officer on my second assignment. I did everything. I did some political reporting for the embassy. Did a lot of cultural programming. There was a lot of press in the Philippines. Most of it was highly irresponsible. But there were one or two newspapers that you could talk to and make some sense with. And I just did everything.

I traveled all over the island. There was still an active insurrection going on. There was the New People's Army, the Communist insurrection, which was relatively small, and the Moro National Liberation Front, the MNLF, which was large. Americans and other foreigners generally could not travel around the island. But I had as one of my cherished possessions a letter signed by Juan Ponce Enrile - who was Minister of Defense at that time, and went on to be one of the leaders of the revolution that threw out Marcos. The letter says "Mr. Shinkman of the American Center is allowed to travel anywhere in Mindanao that he likes." That was kind of a fun thing to have. And I did. I traveled to San Zamboanga.

Q: The monkeys have no tails.



SHINKMAN: The monkeys have no tails. That's right. One of those places a lot of people who like to travel think of one day going to. So I did. I had a good time traveling around.

Q: How did you see the revolt, both the Communist and Moro revolt.

SHINKMAN: I never felt danger. Well, I won't say I never felt danger. I never felt targeted. I thought that if we were injured in this revolt it would just be because we were in the wrong place at the wrong time. It would be because my wife was shopping in the market and somebody rolled a grenade into the market. It would be that sort of thing. We never felt targeted at all.

Plus, the Embassy had its own airplane. The Ambassador had a little twin engine plane that sat eight or ten people. Richard Murphy was our ambassador. A terrific ambassador. Very supportive of us in the south in Mindanao. And he made it very clear that if at any stage we had a shortwave radio with which we could communicate with Manila he said, "if at any stage you feel endangered and want to get out of there, we'll have the plane down there as fast as the plane will fly. It will probably be about an hour and half and we'll have you out of there." So that was comforting also. My wife and I talked about this a lot.

We lived in a gated community. And we had an armed guard at our house 24 hours a day. I don't really know how effective he was, but I guess he was something of a deterrent. But as I said, we didn't feel targeted maybe it was because we were young and foolish, but I don't think so. We talked about it a lot and we felt that the situation was probably okay.

One of the occasions when security really came up again was after I got to know the governor of one of the adjoining provinces. He offered us the use of his beach house if we wanted it. So one weekend we thought, we'll go off to his beach house. It was about an hour and a half drive from Davao over pretty rough roads. Well we got to the place and it was an absolutely beautiful, beautiful beach house. Just splendid. Tile roof, stucco. On a beach with no other development a couple of fishing hut but no other development in sight. It was just an idyllic setting. And the local villagers or the people who maintained the house for the governor had slaughtered a little piglet for us which was "lechon", a great Philippine delicacy, roast suckling pig. And they brought some fresh fish they had just caught. It was absolutely gorgeous. We had a little baby at that time. Our daughter was born, our first child, while we were in Davao. She wasn't born in Davao, but while we were stationed there. And we had taken one of our domestic staff along with us.



Well, we spent the first night there. And at one stage the local fire truck water tanker - showed up with water to fill the tank on top of the house because there wasn't a well. I thought it was interesting that the fire department would take on this task. But I guess if you are the governor you can do what you like. So they filled us up with water. Well, we woke up the next morning and surrounding the house was a squad of soldiers with M-16s, all of them. It was a stunning sight to get up and look out the window. There every ten feet all around the perimeter of the house was a soldier in fatigues with an M-16 over his shoulder. And my wife took one look and looked at our three month old baby and said "we are out of here right now." So we got back in the office car and drove back to Davao. I, of course, had permission to use the office car because it was lightly armored and the embassy said I could use it for these sort of excursions.

Q: Did you get involved in any Philippine-Indonesian disputes while you were there?

SHINKMAN: No. We became fast friends with the Indonesian consul general. A very nice guy. We used to go over to his house for endless "cultural manifestations", as they were usually called in Eastern Europe. Lots of dancing and puppetry. Beautiful, beautiful stuff. I mean it was a very, very rich experience. But no real conflicts. At that stage Ferdinand Marcos had an iron grip on the Philippines and I don't know who would have been in Indonesia if it had been Suharto back then? but there was minimal room for visible friction.

Q: Yeah, it would have been Suharto.

SHINKMAN: So the two leaders each were smart enough to keep their hands off the other's territory. I never met President Marcos but Imelda came to Davao for some function and I met her as the American diplomatic presence on Mindanao.

But as you can imagine in this remote place, there were endless interesting adventures. And I will always remember on the wall of my office I had a map National Geographic map of Mindanao. Not more than 30 miles from my office there was a line drawn on the map separating two provinces. And printed by National Geographic on this line in brackets were the words "Unexplored." And I thought, My God, I'm sitting here in a U.S. government office, air conditioned, with a car outside. And not fifty miles away as the crow flies is an area that is so rugged that obviously it has been explored by natives who lived there. In the Philippines, like many places, they are always "discovering" new sorts of "stone age" tribes but this place is so remote and so rugged and so inhospitable that National Geographic says that border is unexplored. I thought that was kind of impressive.

Q: Well who were your clients?



SHINKMAN: Mostly prominent Filipinos. Businessmen, government officials. I mean I knew everybody on the island. And because they were well to do either because they were well to do, they were very prominent, or they became prominent because they were, however you want to work that we got to know everybody. And we made some good friends. There is a very prominent Filipino family which I think still is very prominent called Aboitiz who own one of the world's major shipping lines. One member of that family, Ernesto, was based in Davao overlooking their plantation holdings. And he and his wife Marie we got to know well. People just liked having us there, it seemed. They were very supportive. Very friendly. We really had a very pleasant two years.

Our baby was due in April of 1980, the middle of our tour there. And being a good, young, Foreign Service family, we thought we would try and have the baby there, in Davao. We looked at the hospitals and they were pretty marginal. But we had an excellent local pediatrician who had received his degree from medical school in the United States, as so many prominent Filipinos had. So we had a high comfort level with the skills of the medical people. The facilities were a bit marginal.

But then the Philippines at that stage Marcos had something where he could declare a person a National Treasure because they were so prominent. It was like getting a Kennedy Center Award or something. About two months before our baby was due our pediatrician was declared by Ferdinand Marcos a National Treasure and around the time the baby was due, he was going to have to go to Malacañang, the palace in Manila, for his awards ceremony. So we thought we'd rather not, at that stage, try to find another local doctor. There was a Regional Medical Officer in Manila who said "you go up to the USAF Regional Medical Center at Clark Air Base, which is one of the best, world class medical facilities, and have the baby there."

I had stayed in the Army Reserve after I got off active duty in 1968 and did two week tours of active duty each summer somewhere in the world. And I arranged to do a two week tour in Quezon City, just north of Manila, where we had just like we had in Vietnam a JUSMAG headquarters. And I went up. My wife came with me. This was about a month before the baby was due and I had two weeks in Quezon City staying in the visiting officers quarters. And we then moved to Clark Air Base and stayed there for a couple of weeks. About that time, my mother flew over from the States and joined us. And the baby was born in April of 1980 in Clark Air Base Regional Medical Center, which gave us a lifelong love and respect for the Air Force and their medical facilities. Just fantastic.

Q: Well then it is probably as you say a good place to stop here. We'll put at the end here, where did you go?



SHINKMAN: From there we finished our two years. I got an assignment in Belgrade. We came back to Washington. Had one year here of language training. Serbo-Croatian. And then went to Belgrade from '82 to '86.

Q: Okay. We'll talk about that next time.

SHINKMAN: I would enjoy it.

\* \* \*

Q: Okay, today is the 13th of December 2004. You took Serbian from when to when?

SHINKMAN: We were at language training at FSI from the fall of 1981 to the spring of 1982. 44 weeks.

Q: How did you find Serbian?

SHINKMAN: The language was extremely difficult, I thought. I have a strong MLAT [Modern Language Aptitude Test] score so I was a prime candidate for a hard language. But I came out of it fine. Got my 3/3. An interesting anecdote I've told many times: first week in class they divided the students into different categories and it wasn't quite clear how they chose who was going to go into what class. But anyway, I found myself in a class with about five students. And we would start some very basic Serbo-Croatian. We would go around the table and all the other four seemed to pick it up really quickly and then it would come to me and the rapid pace would come to a screeching halt. I couldn't figure out what the hell was going on. And this happened repeatedly. I would go home at night and say to my wife, "I'm not a stupid person. I'm good at languages. I'm a good mimic. Why am I not getting this?" Well, it turned out, I learned at the end of the first week they let everything settle down for a week, of course that all four of the other students had studied Russian in high school. So they had a familiarity with not only the structure of a Slavic language, but also with the Cyrillic alphabet. And this was not made known to me before class and so it made me feel absolutely awful. And at the end of the week they took those four who had the Russian familiarity and put them in a separate class and I joined a class of students like myself who had never seen a Cyrillic alphabet before in my life and had not studied languages structured like Slavic languages, which of course are structured a lot different than English is or romance languages are.

Q: What were you picking up from your teachers? Often one gets quite familiar with a country or gets a feel for the ethos or whatever you want to call it of the country from your teachers.



SHINKMAN: They were an interesting bunch. The head of the Serbo-Croatian department; as it was then, was a priest in an Orthodox church. I learned a lot more than I had ever known in my life about the Orthodox church. It was absolutely fascinating to me. I think the quality of teaching was generally good. A couple of weak points, but generally good. We had an older guy who I'm sure cannot be there anymore because he was elderly, but he was teaching us 22, 23 years ago, who was a member of the Royal Navy back when Serbia briefly was a kingdom, I guess. And a little side anecdote for that. Later on, during the fighting in Yugoslavia in the early '90s, when I was in London, I went and had lunch with the crown prince of Serbia - or maybe it was the crown prince of Yugoslavia?

Q: Crown prince of Yugoslavia.

SHINKMAN: No, but it was Serbia, Croatia and maybe even Slovenia.

Q: The kingdom of Slovenes. The Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

SHINKMAN: The kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Yes. That's who he was. And he had actually been born in a grand hotel in London. I think he was born in the hotel, whatever that famous hotel is on Park Lane. The Dorchester, I believe and I believe they declared that suite to be sovereign Serbian territory for the time it took him to be born so that he could be great, rather than, subterfuge so that he could claim to be born on Serbian soil. And we had a pleasant lunch as I say ten years later in London. He's a stockbroker in London and doing very well at it.

Anyway, so yes, we studied the language. I learned the language. I learned a lot about the Orthodox church. Most of the language faculty of course were vehemently anti-Communist. Not surprisingly. And pretty much anti-Tito. And just sort of what you would expect. But as I said, pleasant people and a variety of teaching styles and teaching skills.

Q: Did you get any feel for the Serb-Croatian tensions?

SHINKMAN: Yes. Absolutely. One of the teachers, typically, taught Croato-Serbian, as it was called. And that was for the students who were going to Zagreb. And we would occasionally have classes with that teacher just because it was not a large department at FSI. A teacher would be sick or something and not show up. So the Croato-Serb teacher would take the class. There wasn't hostility but you very much got the sense that they felt that they were two distinct cultures. Serbs and Croats and, you know, there was some friction there, animosity.



Q: You went out when?

SHINKMAN: So I went out the fall of 1982 to Belgrade.

Q: And you were there from when to when?

SHINKMAN: '82 to '86. It was a three year assignment. I extended for a fourth year. We had two very young children and I thought it would not serve their purposes well for us to be moving too soon. Our son was born while we where there, in '83. As I may have mentioned before, I was in the Army Reserve for a long time, which overlapped with much of my Foreign Service career. And so in '83 when Paul was due to be born in August of that year, I arranged with the Pentagon and with the State Departmenor the embassto have an Army Reserve touone of my two week summer tourin Stuttgart, and went up there with the family, with our little daughter Claire, who was born in the Philippines, who was then three, and my wife, who was heavily pregnant. We had two weeks in Stuttgart and then went up to Frankfurt and had another couple of weeks there of annual leave on my paror sick leave, I don't remember whicwhile we waited for the baby to be born. And Paul was then born on August 23rd of 1983.

Q: At Ninety-Seventh General?

SHINKMAN: No. We had the choice of Ninety-Seventh General or the U.S. Air Force Regional Medical Center at Wiesbaden. Because we had had such a positive experience with the Air Force Regional Medical Center in the Philippines when Claire was born, we chose to go to the Air Force Regional Medical Center. And it really was a very good choicboth times the children were delivered by nurse practitioners, not by doctors. Doctors obviously were close at hand should they be needed. The nurse practitioners were both Lieutenant Colonels in the U.S. Air Force. In the Philippines it was a woman, and in Wiesbaden it was a man who delivered the baby.

Q: Now you were what? What was your job?

SHINKMAN: I was the Director of the American Center, which was separate from the American Embassy. The American Embassy was off Kneza Milosa, and we were I guess a mile or maybe two away.

Q: Cika Ljubina.



SHINKMAN: Cika Ljubina. Good for you. Absolutely right. And it's not always a bad thing to work away from the embassy compound. There is a little bit of distance so you can go over to the embassy when you need to be there. But you could also get away from it and get out and do your job. The setting wayou know the building, obviouslit was a beautiful setting on a corner at one end of this historic street in Belgradabout all that's left of Belgrade, really, that's historic and attractive. In Skadarlija, the region that has been largely preserved.

I had the nicest office I've ever had in my life with tall ceilings and tall windows, looking down a grand boulevard. And in the American Center we had printing works, we had a constant series of art exhibits in the gallery, we had visiting speakers, we had a very active library, research center. It was a very, very active American center, which I believl was tolwas the oldest in Europe. It has opened before the end of the Second World War. After the Allies marched through Yugoslavia on their way toward Germany, the American Center was opened immediately. So it was opened sometime early in 1945, I suppose, or late 1944. But it was, as I say, a beautiful location.

It was an interesting job. I met all manner of Yugoslavs, of course. It was an odd time because Tito had died a year or two before. '80 or '81, I don't really remember. And I think everyone felt that he had been masterful at holding Yugoslavia together through the sheer power of his personality. So, everybody felt that the country would collapse after his death. And it didn't. So people were cautiously optimistic. And sort of felt, "gosh, maybe this will work." And that continued for the whole time we were there. The whole time up until 1986 when we left there was a sense that, "gosh, maybe we can make this work."

Q: Now who was the ambassador while you were there?

SHINKMAN: There were two ambassadors during my stay. The first was David Anderson. Both of them were terrific. He was there for my first two years at post, as I recall. And during my third year, Jack Scanlon arrived. They both did an excellent job. They were very good at working with the leadership of the country and did a lot for U.S.-Yugoslav relations.

It was interesting. Of course, the economy was always in difficult straits. The Yugoslavs were very proud of the fact that they were the only country, apparently, to have ever kicked the Soviet military out. The Yugoslavs left the Soviet bloc officially in the late '40s.

Q: '48.



SHINKMAN: Something like that. '48, '49. And they were very proud of that. They liked to think of themselves as more Central European than Eastern European. To us, I think basically, or to most people who didn't study it very closely, they were just another East European country which didn't happen to be behind the Iron Curtain. But they were still in that camp. The Yugoslavs liked to think of themselves as being more sort of Austrian. And actually, of course, they had many, many links to Austria as well as to Hungary. There was the Hungarian province north of Belgrade, Vojvodina. And in Slovenia, there were areas along the border with Austrias we discovered by traveling therewhere on the Austrian side children could go to elementary school and the medium of instruction would be Slovenian. It was territory that had moved back and forth between the two countries over time. And you could, as I say, study in Slovenian in Austria, which is kind of interesting.

Belgrade itself is not a very interesting city. It was largely leveled by the Nazis at the beginning of the Second World War and then leveled again by the Allies at the end of the war, as you know. But it is a wonderful jumping off point. We did more traveling from Belgrade than from anywhere else. We would regularly spend a weekend in Budapest, travel up into the Alps in Austria for New Year's. We would take the car train up to Ljubljana overnight, with a sleeping compartment, and then have a car there and drive into northeastern Italy and have a vacation in Venice or Florence. Every spring we drove due south down through Macedonia to Greece and took a villa on a Greek island for two weeks. Just fabulous vacations and none of them very expensive. Obviously, couldn't afford expensive vacations.

Q: During '82 to '86, what was the Center doing?

SHINKMAN: Well it was outreach to the community. We did a lot with the cultural community, of course. We did a lot with universities. An awful lot of students, of course, university level students. We ran a very active speakers program, much of which fell in my lap. I figured out afterwards that I programmed almost a speaker a week, maybe a speaker a fortnight, over the period I was in Belgrade. So we were out at the Serbian Institute of Architecture, or Civic Engineers, or whatever, and we would have somebody over from the States to talk on that institute's interests. We had a very well known speaker, Ellis Katz, who was head of the Federalism Center at Temple University, who came - a most engaging speaker, because the Yugoslavs were trying to set uor thought they had set ua federal system and thought that elements of it would be similar to ours. So we had a very active speaker program. Lots of outreach to institutes, to universities, cultural programs, just the whole gamut of those sorts of programs. It was an interesting time and, of course, one of the great fun things about being a public diplomacy officer is that you meet these speakers coming from the States who are the top in their field. It was fun to hear these people talk about anything from architecture to federalism and some of them remained friends after we returned to the States.



Belgrade was an interesting assignment. The economy of course was struggling. Tito, as you may remember, had this policy called "Republikanski Kluc", the "republican key", which meant that every one of the six republics had to have what every other republic had. So you had an oil refinery in each of the six republics. You had a steel plant in each of the six republics. And of course the country was about the size of Wyoming, had 20 million people or something. Could not possibly sustain these things. So this very political system was a great drain on the economy.

The decrepitude of the socialist system was evident to me visibly because those part and this isn't really fair to socialist those parts of downtown Belgrade that had been rebuilt in view of my office had all been rebuilt with very poor structures and poor concrete, and I literally could sit at my desk and about once every few weeks. I would hear a great crash outside and would look outside and a balcony had fallen off a building. It was down below and thank God no one had been crushed by it. There would be a pile of rubble and smoke rising from it. And that really did happen regularly just because the buildings were built so poorly. But anyway, the Yugoslavs had hopes the system would work and as we now know it did not.

Q: Did the ethnic tensions permeate your organization?

SHINKMAN: Not very much. No. But, they were evident in society at large. And I have a classic example. I remember each republic well, titles are very important they would all have an Institute of Science and Technology, which was the most important, significant organization in the society. And if you were a member of that and could describe yourself as a member of that institute, that was more important than being a judge or a lawyer, doctor or engineer. That was the title you used. The Institute would publish tracts, as most sorts of organizations do. And I remember one coming out one day, authored by a member of the institute, which professed to say that the Albanian people were genetically inferior to the people in other parts of Yugoslavia.

Well I ran into a very good friend who was a professor at the university one day who had been studying in the States. He had been there on a Fulbright, got his masters degree at SUNY Binghamton or somewhere and he was a member of the Institute. And I said to him, "Voya, how could they print this rubbish? This is crazy. This is nonsense." And he laughed and said "oh, you don't want to worry about that. For political reasons they have to print this stuff from time to time." Then he paused and he said, "but you know the Albanians really are a pretty stupid people." So there was obviously some irrational prejudice there.

Q: Did you get involved in putting anything in Bosnia or Macedonia?



SHINKMAN: We haagain because of the Republikanski Kluc - we had an American center in each of the republics. We had six American centers and some of them were very small and wouldn't under normal circumstances warrant having an American diplomatic presence in that town. I did not supervise the other five center directors but I was in close touch with them and in charge of feeding material to them.

So yes, we fed a lot of material to the other American centers. In Slovenia it was warmly received and the Branch PAO (Public Affairs Officer) had a great time because people loved to get stuff from him. At the other end of the spectrum was Macedonia where it was a pretty hard slog. And Titograd which was the capital of . . .

Q: It was the capital of Montenegro.

SHINKMAN: Montenegro, excuse me. In the capital of Montenegro it was very hard. And the Branch PAO down there faced a really hostile audience. He had a hard time getting people to come to the American Center for a lecture or anything. It really was difficult for him. Sarajevo went through having the Olympics there in '84 and they were much more sort of open and Western as I said. But for the guy down in Titograd, Dell Hood, it was a tough slog. And I think our people down in Macedonia had a pretty difficult time there too.

Q: Yeah. These are sort of the end of the line, in old terms. Sounds pejorative, but it would be basically a different country.

SHINKMAN: Yeah. I think that would be right. I also remember a good example of inter-republic rivalries or lack of cooperation. The Macedonians make absolutely wonderful white wine. Absolutely delicious white wine. Of course at that time the Yugoslav currency, the Dinar, was not convertible. But the entrepreneurs in Slovenithe most highly Westernized republiwould buy the wine from Macedonia in casks for almost nothing and then rebottle it in Slovenia in good Western-looking Austrian bottles with handsome labels, giving the variety of the wine, and then sell it abroad. They had the Pepsi Cola distribution rights. They would pay for the Pepsi Cola to the Pepsi Cola Company with this white wine and get Pepsi Cola back. So it was as good as hard currency in terms of importing something. And the Slovenians did extremely well and the poor Macedonians got a few cents a cask for their absolutely delicious white wine being drunk in the West.

Q: What about the students. Were you teaching English there?



SHINKMAN: We did not because the university had a very large, active English teaching program. So we really didn't need to. There was ample opportunity for people to study English. I worked closely with all the professors in the English department at the University of Belgrade. We provided them with materials. Of course, the wonderful publication English Teaching Forum is the publication that the State Department produces. It's a fantastic magazine and just cherished by these teachers and read by dozens of people per issue. We worked closely with them and provided them with a lot of support materials. There was also the British Council there and we always have a friendly rivalry with them about whether the host country students will prefer to study British English or American English. But we worked closely with the Council.

I remember one interesting anecdote. I've had obviously no contact or experience with North Korea anywhere in my career. But I remember talking to one of the English professors at the University of Belgrade once and she said that she had a course. Kim Il-Sung was the North Korean dictator and she had one of her North Korean students ... There were a lot of third world students who came to Yugoslavia because Tito had been very active in the Group of 77 and the Non-Aligned Movement [NAM], he was very active along with Kwame Nkrumah and others. But Yugoslavia was very big on the Third World scale and a lot of Third World students came to Yugoslavia to study everything from veterinary medicine to English. So, there were North Korean students there. And she called the student in for his final exam in English and she was trying to think of some subject that he could discuss and show his mastery of the language, and she said, "Tell me about Kim Il-Sung." Well, she said the blood absolutely drained out of his face. He was terrified. Kim Il-Sung apparently was so revered of course he was holy and everything else that even to mention his name was just way beyond a simple mortal's ability. And she had to change the subject before he could utter a word. The guy was just helpless. So that was funny. But yes, we worked a lot with English language people.

Q: What was the main thing you were doing there?

SHINKMAN: I'm trying to think of themes that we had in our Country Plan as we used to have for USIA. We wanted to support English teaching, of course. We wanted to help support federalism. We thought that if the country was going to work, I believe, it was our policy that to help them develop a federal system was a good way to do that. So, as I said, we brought in speakers on federalism. We talked a lot to the media. We did everything we could to encourage open media. And of course the media was completely controlled. But there were reporters or journalists who we were able to send to the States for IV (International Visitor) tours and those sorts of programs. And there is no question that those people came back with very different views than before they left. For those sorts of people an IV grant can be life changing. And many of our contacts who went on those programs came back.



The only one who didn't benefit here's another little anecdote, I always have anecdotes. Part of my territory, Serbia, of course, included the provinces of Vojvodina to the north, which was the Hungarian ethnic region, and the Kosovo to the south. They were given a title which meant that they had some autonomy but in fact they had none. They were just part of Serbia.

"Semi-autonomous region" or something like that. So I would go down to Kosovo, I would go down to Pristina every month or two with a visiting speaker or for some other reason and always enjoyed it. A fascinating, very remote and rural area. But I found a local party hack, a guy who had risen to a prominent position in the local Communist party. And I thought maybe we could get this guy to the States - he had been to the Soviet Union and treated royally and teach him a bit about an open and free society. Well, it was in my whole career and I've sent an awful lot of people on International Visitor program it was the only one that was a complete loss. He came back absolutely unchanged and very disgruntled because he thought he had not been treated with the deference and respect that he should have been. He expected to have chauffeured limousines to take him every where he wanted to go. And as we always do on the International Visitors program, we try to put visitors on local trains and planes and taxis or go with a group of people in a van and do it the way we Americans do it. But he was not content that he had not been met with chauffeured limousines at every turn. So he didn't do too well. But we tried to get people from all strata of society, all variety of professions, to the States.

Federalism as I recall was one of our main themes. Yugoslavia was drafting its constitution and it was something like the tenth constitution they had had in twenty years. Unlike ours which is remarkably brief and crisp, theirs was something like six hundred pages long and had everything down to the price of a parking ticket, I think. Those were the sorts of things included in it. And we were trying to help them establish a government that could sustain itself and that would be responsive to the citizens of Yugoslavia.

Q: Did you find that the cultural establishment I'm thinking about plays, dance others were coming and using your facilities to find out what the Americans were doing?

SHINKMAN: Well, they had some access. I mean for a Communist country they were relatively open. It wasn't really a clamped down society. It was open in many ways. I think they had their own access to news from the west and to cultural news from the west. So I don't think that was a real problem for them. They always hungered for more information and we provided it. But as far as we could tell, anybody could come into our library who wanted to. And we had all the latest magazines.

Q: What sort of books did you have?



SHINKMAN: Well again, the books I select and we spent a lot of money on books. I don't know what the budget was probably ten, fifteen thousand dollars a year. We would select titles that we thought were the best of American literature, of all sorts. And books about good governance. Obviously, as is our custom, we steered away from technical books. But a lot of good literature. A lot of good stuff about the social sciences. And then what people wanted. If I had a good contact and he needed a book and he couldn't get it, I would buy it for him and put it on the library shelves and he could borrow it and many other people could read it also.

As I say, it was really quite an open society. And an interesting thing: my wife, while we were there, worked at a large refugee camp run by the U.N. High Commission for Refugees [UNHCR]. In those days, in Soviet Satellite countries in Eastern Europe to leave the country you had to go through a bizarre process of getting an exit permit to be allowed to leave your own country. A lot of East Europeans could get exit permits to go to their Socialist colleague country Yugoslavia, when they couldn't get an exit permit to go anywhere in Western Europe. So they would come down to Yugoslavia on vacation. They would get a package tour to go to the Dalmatian Coast. And then would make their way up the coast by foot or whatever to the Austrian border. Try and get across. The border guards would stop them, generally in a friendly manner, and say "We cannot let you cross. But go back to Belgrade, show up at the UN High Commission for Refugees refugee camp and then you can stay there and eventually you'll go to Australia or to the UK or to the U.S." And my wife worked at the UNHCR refugee camp teaching English.

It was extraordinary ... another one of these things that we Foreign Service officers experience so often: What people will do to try to escape from tyranny. For Thanksgiving, we would invite people from the refugee camp to come people that my wife had met in her English class to come for Thanksgiving dinner with us and experience an American holiday.

I remember one memorable Thanksgiving when we had a couple come who were both dentists, people who were of a high social standing, from Czechoslovakia. They had for a long time wanted to leave the country. They couldn't let that desire be known, of course. So they started to build a house. And they built a whole house from the ground up, with all of their resources, bricks and whatever, so that when they went to apply for their exit visa down at the local government office and the inspector said cynically "How do I know you will come back?" They could say "My God, we just built this whole house. We've put everything we've owned into it. Of course we're coming back." And they got their visas. The whole thing was a sham. It was a real house, but it was only built so that they could escape. They turned up at the UN refugee camp and I think we actually bought them some suitcases because they had nothing to carry their clothes in. Before we left Yugoslavia, they got exit visas to emigrate to Australia. Again it was interesting that Yugoslavia was a sort of byroad or crossroad where people from the East could get there and then could get out.



Q: Did we have any ongoing programs there that the staff was doing? Or did you have people sent to you?

SHINKMAN: No. It would be people who came to us through the speakers program in Washington. I mean, of course embassy employees like myself would go out and talk to English classes and things like that. But most of the speakers program was speakers brought in. And the Yugoslav staff would go with us, of course, to these events, but didn't participate as spokespersons particularly.

Q: How did you find the authority of the Yugoslav government responded to these lectures? Were you able to get visas from the ministries and all that or not?

SHINKMAN: It depended very much on the individuals. One of our strongest contacts was the government press spokesman at the parliament. Ambassador Scanlon, after he left government service, worked for a pharmaceutical company in Los Angeles started by a Yugoslav immigrant. And that company hired this same man later that was years after we left who had been the government press spokesman in Yugoslavia to work for them. So some people had the self confidence to work with us and I guess had confidence in their positions. I'm sure they knew very clearly that their contacts with us were being monitored.

It always amused me, there was a very small Protestant church community that was made up of expatriates. So we were active informally in church circles. We would go once a year and have a service that was arranged at the Orthodox patriarch's private chapel. I would talk religion to our contacts sometimes, in a very casual social environment or whatever. And almost always the although obviously organized religion was discouraged in a Communist society many Yugoslavs would still have their kids baptized at birth. All the children were baptized, certainly that we knew. It would just come up in the course of conversation. It was not something we would necessarily ask.

Q: As I recall, you are sort of in a clad-iron type of building at Cika Ljubina. Did you have any problems in the show windows which you had at the center? Something the authorities would say "Well this is out of bounds?" or something like that?



SHINKMAN: Not that I recall. It would have been a logical thing to happen. But I don't recall it happening. Gosh, you know, now that you mention it, there's something in the back of my mind, but I can't remember it. If it happened, it only happened once during the four years I was there. And I don't think we consciously, I'm sure we did not consciously choose materials that would not be provocative. At the same time, we would not choose things that would be provocative on purpose. But I think we just, you know, got exhibits from Washington on whatever subject and we put them up. You know, we had a U.S. Presidential election while we were there, so we put up stuff about the elections and that sort of material. But no, I don't recall a problem with that. The only thing I remember about the outside of the building is that someone came once and put a little PLO Palestine liberation flag draped over our front door one night. I turned it over to the RSO (Regional Security Officer) and I've always kicked myself because I wish I had kept it. I think it would have been such a neat souvenir. But I did the right thing and turned it over to the RSO.

Q: Well I remember I was there when Kennedy was assassinated. And of course the window had all sorts of pictures of him. And there were flowers laid there. It was very moving. Well, how were the police? I mean, we are talking about the security apparatus. Were they a problem or not?

SHINKMAN: I never had a problem. We had an unusual status. The American Center Director was given special status, but not diplomatic status, which always kind of irritated me. There would be a letter on the license plate for all diplomats. I think the letter was "A."

Q: "A," yes. "60A."

SHINKMAN: "60A" was the American. There would be two digits, the letter "A" and then the number of the vehicle. And "60A" was the American embassy. And we were "20E," which was sort of "all other semi-official organizations." I guess the UN High Commission for Refugees for instance would be "20E" and maybe foreign news agencies, I don't know. But anyway, it was people who weren't diplomats but were sort of almost diplomats. As I said, it used to irritate me. But it didn't make a big difference. We seemed to be treated the same as everybody else. I'm sure when I traveled, particularly to places like Kosovo, that I was watched. I mean you just assumed that you were. You assume I have no evidence that our telephone was bugged but we always assumed, every minute, that we were. I don't have any evidence that my staff were reporting to the police. But in those sorts of controlled societies, there are so many gradations of what it means to be watched that I'm sure we were, whether it was just somebody checking in at the local police station once a week or somebody actually doing it because it was their job. So we were just always cautious about that. Careful not to say things that were not politic when we were at home or anywhere else. There was always an awareness, but it didn't disrupt our lives much.



Q: What about the Soviet effort there? How did you view that?

SHINKMAN: Well, the Soviets certainly had a big effort there. But I'm not sure how successful it was. A lot of Yugoslavs had studied in the Soviet Union and had grants to go and study again, everything, in Moscow. But I think the Yugoslavs really did, as I said, like to think of themselves as being sort of Central Europe and I think they liked to sort of mildly thumb their nose at the Soviets, having, as I said, kicked them out and not being part of the Soviet bloc. They were very proud of that, as they should have been.

Q: Who was the Public Affairs Officer?

SHINKMAN: Bud Korengold, former bureau chief in Moscow for Newsweek. Bud is still around, he's living in France at the moment with his French wife. He had joined USIA as, I think, an editor when the Agency had a large publishing program. I believe he came directly from Newsweek to become editor of one of our magazines. And then, as he became more familiar with Foreign Service life, he applied and was brought into the Foreign Service on a mid-level transfer. He was our PAO. He went to post the same time we went, in the summer of '82. He was a terrifically hard working guy and a terrifically nice guy. We became lifelong friends with Bud and with Christine. He had been I think in Brussels in some position. Not as PAO, I believe. I'm a little foggy here. But he got the job as PAO in Belgrade, which was a very significant job in USIA in those days, one of the largest PAO-ships. He had six American Centers, he had a couple dozen Americans working for him. But then a guy he had worked for in Belgium, Charlie Price, went to London to be U.S. ambassador and there asked USIA to send Bud up to be his PAO in London. So he was with us in Yugoslavia for the first three years, I guess, and then he went up to London to be PAO. A great assignment, of course. And after that we got Michael Eisenstadt, who was also a very good PAO but a more conventional Foreign Service officer.

Q: Mike Eisenstadt had been in Belgrade before, hadn't he?

SHINKMAN: I believe so. I believe he had a tour earlier.

Q: Yeah. I was there with Mike Eisenstadt and David Anderson and Larry Eagleburger and Jim Lowenstein and some others.



SHINKMAN: I think he had been there before and I think that's one of the reasons they sent him back. And he did a good job. But much more conventional. Bud was, of course, very much the newspaperman sort of journalist and liked that aspect of the work, I think, much more than the cultural work, but was very good at both. Bud was a good, innovative PAO and we had good PAOs, as I said, both of them.

Q: Well then you left there in '86?

SHINKMAN: Left there in '86. Came back for my first assignment in Washington. I was a Special Assistant in the front office of what is now called IIP, the Bureau of International and Information Programs; at that stage it was just called the P Bureau, the Bureau of Programs. The senior Civil Service staffer there was a guy named Mike Schneider, who I'm still in touch with. He was the Deputy Associate Director. At USIA, the Assistant Secretary level position was called Associate Director. The Associate Director was a political appointee named Charles Horner, whose wife was the head of OPM, Constance Horner. Charles was the Associate Director, the Assistant Secretary level position. The senior career person under him was Mike Schneider, who was the Deputy Associate Director. And I was the Special Assistant there for two years.

Q: This would be from '86 to '88?

SHINKMAN: '86 to '88.

Q: Who was the director of USIA?

SHINKMAN: It has to have been Charlie Wick.

Q: It would have been Charlie Wick.

SHINKMAN: I think, but I get a little muddled with which years Wick was at USIA.

Q: Well, he was there the whole time, the whole Reagan time.

SHINKMAN: I think he was, yes.

Q: Did the director of USIA impede on you at all? Did you feel his hand?



SHINKMAN: Not really. We worked in offices just down the corridor from where he was, so I saw him regularly and attended events where he was in the chair. But he didn't have a particularly direct impact on me, which I think was fine by me. He was a very energetic director of the agency and I think . . .

Q: Well, what were you doing?

SHINKMAN: Well, just doing sort of Special Assistant stuff. Being helpful and setting up meetings. Running around. It was a large bureau. We had, as I said earlier, a large publishing office that published magazines. We had - was it called Span or Scan? the magazine for India. It was an enormously big effort. We had magazines for the Soviet Union. Of course we published a magazine that was very highly regarded by Sovietologists called Problems of Communism that was really the premier magazine in that field. So we had a lot of magazines we published. We also ran the very active speakers program. It was a big active bureau, as IIP is now in the State Department. And I was just doing whatever Mike Schneider and Charles Horner wanted me to do.

There were two other special assistants. One Craig Springer, who is now retired. One Maria Copson, whose main liaison was with the Pentagon. She was a GS employee. Craig was a Foreign Service Officer. And Maria went over subsequently to work in the Pentagon. But yes, those were the sorts of things that we did.

Q: Did you have much contact with the State Department?

SHINKMAN: No. Not a lot. I would come over for meetings, but probably not even weekly. Probably monthly, something like that. Not a lot. It was mostly internal workings of the bureau that I was involved in. Charles Horner was very close with various people in the White House, so he spent a fair amount of time at the White House. But that was him. That didn't really bring me into that orbit.

Q: Did you get any geographic focus at all where you were?



SHINKMAN: No. Charles Horner was very interested in what was going on in Latin America at that time. It was a time of great turmoil and revolutions and a lot of fighting in Central America. And he was involved in that and had a trip or two, I think, down among the Central American countries. But that would have been the closest thing. He also haand this really wasn't a programming activitbut he was always very interested in the Baltic countries and was very keen to celebrate Baltic Independence Day and the fact that the United States never, ever recognized the incorporation of the three Baltic countries into the Soviet bloc. But that was, I think, more a personal whim on his part. Not a whim, but a personal interest on his part and not something that got into our programming very much. We did do a lot for Central America. And that was a focus of interest.

Q: You did that for . . .

SHINKMAN: Two years.

Q: And did you have another assignment after that?

SHINKMAN: Yes, I had back-to-back assignments in Washington. I went from there tl got the job, a wonderful assignment, of desk officer in the European area office for an all-time great list of countries: the United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, the European Commission as it was then, and the OECD. As any Foreign Service Officer would appreciate, I had, of course to go and visit my posts. So I had a wonderful trip that went from London to Paris to Brussels, back to Dublin, and then back to Washington. It was a great trip.

Q: If you are looking at it, these would almost be the countries that I would think the tendency would be to almost write off programs because they all know us . . .

SHINKMAN: . . . so well. Yes. Well, of course the EC was in the process of becoming the European Union. Those posts were all major missions. We had senior FSOs as PAOs at all of them, running very active programs. It was less a problem of getting them materials. In this case, the desk officer spent most of the time coordinating the needs of the posts in Washington because they were very important. The front office of USIA was interested in what was going on at those posts. And certainly my boss, the Director of the area office, and his deputy were very interested in what was going on in my posts. So when I went into a meeting where there were all the desk officers, generally the interest would be focused on what was happening in the Uthese were the years of Margaret Thatcher. And we had such a close relationship with the UK. I guess we had the Falklands during that time? I'm not sure.



Q: Well, no. We have the Falklands in '82 I believe.

SHINKMAN: Okay. So that was earlier. Yes. But the relationship with the UK of course was so strong that that post was of great interest. The EC was becoming the EU. At the OEC this is more State Department talk than foreign policy talk. We always had a question about whether we were going to have a USIA Foreign Service Officer position there. We had closed the position down for a while. And then we opened it up while I was on the desk, so of course it was "very important" that I go to Paris and see how he was doing. Ireland was always what Ireland always is, which is basically the IRA and relations between Dublin and Belfast.

Q: And usually the care and feeding of a very political ambassador with Irish roots or something.

SHINKMAN: Yes. Exactly. Aged. Usually they were quite elderly people. Although, my colleague here in e-diplomacy Joe Johnson was PAO in Ireland at that time. In Dublin. We were chatting over dinner last week about the fact that that is one post that seems to be almost cursed, they always seem to get really difficult ambassadors. Without naming any names; I'm sure there have been some very strong ones, too. And some of the FSN support staff were also quite difficult. So it's not the sort of dream assignment that one might think. My God, go to Dublin and listen to Dylan Thomas in the pub every night for four years. It could be a pretty tough assignment, but it is a great place to be. So I had a good visit there.

I did, actually, have another trip planned to Bermuda largely because of the International Visitor Program, well not because of the International Visitor Program. Geopolitically Bermuda comes under the UK. So when they had to find out who was the desk officer for Bermuda, that would be me. So I tried to convince my boss, the Deputy Area Director in EU, to sponsor me for this great grand tour of Europe through the four capitals, and then to tack on a trip through Hamilton, Bermuda on the way back to Washington. She was rather skeptical, but not entirely unwilling, and said "Well if you can do it without adding any cost to the airplane ticket, we can pay for a day of per diem for you to be in Hamilton, Bermuda." Unfortunately it turned out that it would have added a lot to the airplane ticket. It would have been a lot cheaper just to come back to Washington and do a round trip Washington-Hamilton-Washington. So I never got to Bermuda on official business with the U.S. government. But I tried. I also had a wonderful trip up to Canada, which was the fifth post I looked after. The itinerary involved traveling from Ottawa to Montreal to Toronto and then out to Vancouver. I really got my first taste of that country.

Q: Did you find that our information focus after all, they had to subscribe to the same papers we do. Well, it's not quite that, but they are following events in the United States extremely closely. Was there a difference between say Vancouver and people in Ottawa and how . . .



SHINKMAN: Well, when we get to my assignment in Canada I think I can give a better view of that because that definitely is the case. But it's not something I really noticed, and that's another aspect about my assignment in Canada that was so interesting. But I didn't really notice regional differences. I had just the one trip during my two years. And the whole thing was within probably ten days. So I didn't really have time to notice those distinctions. But we had a very active Public Diplomacy program in Canada.

A thing that Canada suffers from always is that feeling that the government in Washington doesn't pay enough attention to it. And we had a very senior PAO there, a very senior Foreign Service Officer, who was constantly frustrated that he couldn't get more resources out of Washington for his program in Canada, because the post was very active.

Programming was very active at the European Commission, too. The OECD post was just getting started back up again. But London was a large program, it must have had close to ten Americans there and a large FSN staff. We had a CAO and two ACAOs, and an IO and two AIOs. And another American position who did speakers for all of Europe out of the London embassy. And an American secretary, and American Deputy PAO, which you find almost nowhere anymore and that job has since been cut. So it was a big active, prominent program.

And of course, one of the major things you do - and again I'll get into this when I talk about my London tour - is that we had very high profile ambassadors, of course, very high profile. Plus you are in an English speaking country so, whereas, if you are in Belgrade, no matter how good the American ambassador's Serbian waand both David Anderson and Jack Scanlon had very good Serbiayou can't go out and speak everywhere all the time. In the UK every venue is automatically open to you. And there are just no restrictions. So the public relations and public affairs demands on an ambassador are just enormous in a country like the UK. And everybody wants to hear him speak. So it made for a very busy program.

Q: Well then, after two years of this, it would be 1990, wouldn't it?

SHINKMAN: It was 1990. Exactly right.

Q: And what happened?



SHINKMAN: I went off to London. By the spring of that year, I had no assignment. USIA was already pretty much through the assignments process. It must have been February or March and the PAO, one of the more famous PAOs in USIA, Sam Courtney, who I knew well because I had been his Desk Officer, called me up and said "things aren't working out between me and the current IO. If I let him go, would you come and be the IO?" I said "Well, I certainly can't have anything to do with anyone else leaving post." But I went home and talked to my wife and she agreed that if there was a posting on the Open Assignments List, that if press spokesman, or IO London, suddenly became available, we would bid on it. And so it did come available. And that summer, in August, we went to London.

I timed our arrival for August thinking that all West Europeans are off on vacation for the whole month. And a week before we got there, of course, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. So it immediately became just the most frantic job I've ever had. I've never worked so hard in my life and I've never enjoyed the work so much.

Q: What were you doing?

SHINKMAN: I was the press spokesman. I had two deputy Information Officers there. A staff of about eight FSNs. London is an extraordinary media environment. You have 11 daily newspapers. The full spectrum from sports tabloids to the Times and the Telegraph, but all of them broadly read. The British are a great newspaper reading public. So you had those journalists to take care of, who of course all had their own sources of information. They weren't really relying on us. But when we had speeches by the President or something that we wanted to get out, we could get the press the full text of something where they may have just seen the news report from Washington. Our job was to get full materials to them absolutely immediately.

We also had of course the large broadcasting networks there, the BBworld famous. We worked very closely with the BBC World Service that is listened to all over the world. Most of the major American media who have offices in Europe or the Middle East have those offices in London. A lot of the Middle Eastern and Northern African coverage from American media comes out of their bureaus in London. So again, another big audience for us.

In the Middle East as I say, the first Gulf War was going on all of the expatriate Middle Eastern media have their bureaus in London because of British historical links to that part of the world.

So we had just everybody there. It was extraordinary the amount of media and the number of media outlets in London.



With the Middle Eastern media, we started a brand new thing when I was IO; we found an guy in the mail room at the Embassy who was Egyptian and absolutely bilingual. So I got money from Washington to hire him half time, 20 hours a week, just to read the expatriate Middle Eastern media in Arabic and do a synopsis which we could then send back to Washington. It was a frenetically busy time and of course the ambassador was constantly in demand.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

SHINKMAN: Originally, my first six months there it was Henry Catto. USIA had been going through a very difficult stage with its leadership. Henry Catto was very close to the Bush family professionally and I think personally also. The first President Bush called him up and said "Henry, I need you to come back here and take over USIA." And so he, I think reluctant to leave London, of course, but given really a great challenge and from the president, came back and did a terrific job of pulling USIA back together.

At that stage we got a guy who had been the Department's Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, Ray Seitz, who had previously served in London as the DCM. He came back as ambassador, and was the first eveand onlcareer officer to be the American ambassador to the Court of Saint James's. He was there from the spring of '91 until about the spring of '94, when he left. And that's when Admiral Bill Crowe came in and became the ambassador. I worked with him for four or five months and again, I had three absolutely brilliant ambassadors and I got along enormously well with them. They were all media savvy, media friendly. They were also greatly in demand. The phone at home would ring all weekend long with requests to speak to the ambassador. And they'd want him in their studios at seven o'clock Monday morning.

There's a radio program called Today on BBC Radio Four, which is absolutely the agenda-setter for the day, every day, in the United Kingdom, and it went on I believe from seven to nine, or six-thirty to nine. The key period to be on that show was between seven-thirty and eight-thirty, when people were getting up and shaving and had the radio on. And inevitably if the Ambassador was on, later during the day someone would come up to him and say "well I heard you on Today this morning and you said this, that and the other." So we wanted to get him on; he was always amenable to being on, and the BBC wanted to have him on. I would guess almost once a week, maybe once a fortnight, I'd be at the curb picking up the newspapers at five in the morning, reading all the newspapers that were important, then going to Winfield House to brief the ambassador as he went on live on-the-air on the BBC from Winfield House at seven-thirty or eight o'clock in the morning.



And the only wamy wife would sathat we could get away from this was we would occasionally take a long weekend at a cottage somewhere in Wales where they didn't have a telephone. Of course we didn't have cell phones at that stage. And so it was the only way really to get away from the work. But it was so much fun. And you felt you were accomplishing a lot, because you were really getting a lot of material, a lot of information into the media. Dealing with the BBC World Service, whatever you are saying is being broadcast around the world.

Q: The British press and I'm not sure about radio, because I'm less familiar with the BBC mean, they've got some really vicious papers. Some of their press is beyond belief practically.

SHINKMAN: Yes. Most of the press we dealt with were main stream. A lot of it was, I wouldn't call it anti-American, but papers like the Guardian naturally will be inclined to look skeptically at American foreign policy. The Times and the Telegraph would be more amenable, usually, but not always. I would always say to myself and to the journalists, "I don't really care what your opinion is. I would like it if you like us, but that's not my job. My job is to make sure you are informed and make sure that you have got all the information and that the information you have is accurate and accurately reflects U.S. government foreign policy. If that's the case, then you write what you like. As I said, I hope you will write that you like it, but that's not my job." I found them generally to be fair, not always, but generally to be fair in their reporting and they may just have had opinions that differed from ours.

Q: Well did you find yourself every once in a while coming up against the, what was it the Sun or whatever it is . . .

SHINKMAN: The Sun I think is the largest circulation English language newspaper in the world. And I used to about once every two or three months go and take the editor not the editor, the editorial page editor to lunch, just to chat with him. He usually figured we weren't conservative enough as a country. I always remember, he had something about Abraham Lincoln. He thought that Lincoln had just not been that great a president. He used to tick off things that he should have done but didn't do, that sort of thing. It was sort of an odd relationship. But I just wanted to know what this guy was thinking. I figured there were more people reading what this guy writes, no matter what it is, than just about any other writer or editor in the English language press in the world. So I wanted to know.

But we didn't spend a lot of time with the Sun or the Daily Mirror, which is the Labor equivalent of the Sun. Our time was mostly with The Guardian, The Times, The Telegraph and The Independent, and then also with the Daily Express.

Q: How about TV?



SHINKMAN: Television we did a fair amount, usually commentary programs. Not a lot with their news reporting because they have big bureaus in Washington and New York and we just were not able to contribute to that. But the ambassador would go on news commentary programs sort of the Ted Koppel type program quite regularly. And again, there were only a couple of programs - there was one in particular, and I can't remember what the interviewer's name was, but he was just such a nasty piece of work. His goal as far as I could tell from watching the program regularly was just to be unpleasant. And I thought "We don't have to go there. His program is not so important that it is critical that we be on that man's program." So I regularly turned down requests from his producers to have the American ambassador appear on the show. But we appeared on lots of the evening news analysis programs, as I said, the Ted Koppel, the Jim Lehrer type of commentary programs.

And radio. Radio was the big thing. I mean if you take NPR here and American broadcast television and sort of invert their importance. That's the way it is. Radio news, particularly for the people we were dealing with, was the way to get your message across, much more than television.

Q: Would they listen to it in the car in the morning?

SHINKMAN: Yes. As they were shaving, getting ready to go to work in the morning, and then listen to it in the car. But BBC Radio Four really was the agenda setter for the day and inevitably, to repeat myself, if you were on in the morning, someone would come up to the ambassador, or many people would come up during the day and say "I heard you this morning on the Today program and you said this and what about that."

Q: Here in Washington, it's usually the Washington Post and the New York Times that are the agenda setters.

SHINKMAN: More than radio. I mean some people listen to NPR, but it doesn't have the clout that, as I say, in the UK radio really does.

Q: How did you find the chattering class, the political commentators and all that? You know, one always thinks of the French intelligentsia as being somewhat anti-American. How did you find the British?



SHINKMAN: You got elements of that. I don't think you got a lot of it. I mean I think you found it not just, as you say, in the chattering classes. You know, it's a very, very hierarchical social structure and they also have titles and all that sort of stuff. As much as they say it's not important, it is still very important. And you will have that relatively small subset of Brits who can't get over the idea that theirs isn't still the empire ruling the world. And those certain people can be sort of tiresome and you just knew who they were and got used to them and dealt with them. But the vast majority of people I thin intelligent, thoughtful people admired us for what we've accomplished, admired our society, had strong differences with us on things like gun control of course, the obvious one that comes up time and again but generally admired the United States, loved to travel in the United States. And we'd get into healthy discussions if not arguments.

But I always felt that they were fair. Usually felt that they were fair. You know, you quickly identified those people who just were not interested in your point of view. They were going to dislike it or disagree with it no matter what it was. You just got used to those people and had less to do with them than with those who were open to a good discussion.

Q: How was George Bush, Sr. treated there?

SHINKMAN: I think he was treated well. Of course he and Margaret Thatcher had a very close relationship. As did they both with Henry Catto. Ambassador Catto was very well received in the government in London and I think, if I'm not mistaken, that George Bush and Margaret Thatcher were at Henry Catto's ski lodge in Aspen when word came that Saddam Hussein had invaded Kuwait. I think so.

Q: I think so. This was when, at a certain point where Thatcher told George not to get involved.

SHINKMAN: "It's not a time to go wobbly, George." That's right. And of course they were our biggest allies in the first Gulf War, clearly. So we had a very close relationship between the two governments. Everybody wants to travel to London, but we calculated, in the first years of the Clinton administration, that which would be my second two years in London that literally every member of the cabinet came through. Every single member of the American cabinet. For good business reasons, I'm sure. But they all found some reason to come through. There is a whole large section of the embassy devoted to looking after official visitors because it is so important to have them treated well. They just come through non-stop.

Q: Were there any sort of issues during this four years you were there American-British issues that were really controversial or insolvable?



SHINKMAN: Um, no not really. The Northern Ireland issue was always a bit of a problem. And we would have from time to time ambassadors in the Republic who felt that they could freelance a bit and maybe move the peace process forward faster than American foreign policy directed, and that would confuse things sometimes in London. And the government in London wouldn't quite be able to figure out what was going on. However, most of the sophisticated people in the Foreign Office understood our system well enough to know what was going on. But that was regularly an issue. There may well have been others, but I just don't remember what they were.

Of course Margaret Thatcher was turned out of office while I was there. And John Major came in. But again, we dealt of course with whomever the Prime Minister was.

Q: From the embassy officers, what was the evaluation you were getting from them about the time of Margaret Thatcher?

SHINKMAN: Well I think she was a very, obviously, historically strong leader. She was popular. The Labor party had a very hard time gaining any traction because she was such a steamroller in office. But she was thrown out. I think it is broadly felt that she broke the back of the unions. When I was working on Fleet Street in the late '60s early '70s the unions absolutely ruled it then, and the cases of feather bedding were just horrible. There was nothing that the publishers could do about it. And that was spread throughout industry. The automotive industry was famous for it also, as well as all others. And she really did take them, you know, directly on and won, and transformed British society in doing that. Transformed the British economy I think in doing that.

But I think she was also one of these people that people seem to love to hate. Wildly unpopular in some sectors of British society.

Q: Well Oxford never gave her an honorary degree.

SHINKMAN: Is that right? I hadn't heard that, but I can believe that. The academic community weren't always great supporters of Margaret Thatcher.

Q: Did Rupert Murdoch or his operation cross your path?



SHINKMAN: Yes. Well, sort of. I mean he was just starting to really get a hold . . . I'm trying to think of when he bought the Times. He was starting to get a hold. And there was the typical sort of British wariness about a foreigner coming in and having quite so much control. But again there was respect for the fact that he was such a dynamic businessman and had really turned some publications around and made them very profitable. The Times had sort of lumbered along for whatever it was more than a hundred years as a newspaper and I think he really shook it up and made it a better newspaper. But there was a lot of gnashing of teeth when he did so.

Q: And then where did you go after this? 1992.

SHINKMAN: '94. After London I came back to Washington. It was not my choice. But one of things I learned serving in London is you will never get any respect. It's not a great job for getting promoted because everybody thinks "Oh my God, London" no matter what you say about it being the most frantic posting ever. And they kept offering me posts that I just was not prepared to go to. I remember they desperately needed somebody to go to Kingston, Jamaica to be PAO. And I at that stage had children who were 10 and 14, in elementary and middle school. And I called up the current PAO to find out what was going on. Well, the current PAO the reason there was a vacancy had just curtailed because the schools were so appalling. I said "Well I'm not going to take my family there." So, I ended up coming back to Washington.

Q: Okay. We'll pick this up in '94 when you were going back to Washington.

Q: Okay. Today is the 27th of January 2005. You're off to where now? Back to the States?

SHINKMAN: Yes. 1994. I had sought valiantly another posting abroad but one of the things I learned about London, which I probably said last time we were recording, it was certainly the most exciting assignment I ever had and the hardest work I ever did, but serving in a place like London and maybe particularly London or maybe London and Paris and Rome, you talk about how hard you worked and people roll their eyes and say "Yeah, right." So there was no chance of getting any sort of decent assignment despite my best efforts. I had kids going off to high school, a daughter getting ready to go off to high school.

We came back to Washington. And I went to work as the Special Assistant for the Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs. This was when USIA was still of course a separate agency. The Associate Director was the Assistant Secretary level position at USIA. And he was the guy in charge of, as I say, Educational and Cultural Affairs. It is what is now ECA, the job that Assistant Secretary Pat Harrison has.



And it was an interesting assignment. It wasn't the most fun I've ever had. But what it taught me, as Washington assignments often do, is where all the pieces fit back in Washington. Such an assignment really helps your effectiveness when you are abroad as a Foreign Service Officer to have had time in Washington to see exactly where all the policy making jobs are, how they all fit together, and to make those contacts so that when you are abroad and you need difficult information or a difficult answer you can pick up the phone and know what office to call and in most cases know what person to call. So professionally it was an enormously helpful assignment from that point of view.

It also taught me for the first time the structure of the ECA, which is what we called at that time the "E Bureau" at USIA. I got used to working with a very high level political appointee. I'd had that in London in that the ambassadors, two of the three ambassadors I served, were political appointees. I think my lasting impression of the job and the time was seeing how the government works through the eyes of a political appointee rather than a career government employed Foreign Service Officer or GS employee, someone who had been 20 years working for the government as a full time employee. Seeing the different relationships . . .

Q: Who was this you were working for?

SHINKMAN: The Associate Director was Jack Loiello.

Q: What was his background?

SHINKMAN: He was a political operative in the Democratic Party. I don't know a lot about it. Both parties have offices or projects that do work abroad and I think he was head of, it's not Democrats Abroad, but it's the National Democratic Institute.

Q: Yeah, there's two of them. But basically they are doing the same thing. They are working the same side of the street essentially, promoting democracy, particularly in the newly emerging countries in the Soviet Union . . .

SHINKMAN: That's right. Eastern Europe, that sort of thing. And so I think that's what he had done at one stage. Most of the people I believe in that position before him had come from academia. But he didn't. He came and he was there for, I guess, three or four years, something like that.

Q: You were doing this from when to when, now?



SHINKMAN: That was the summer of 1994 until the summer of 1997. And in the spring of 1997 we wanted to go abroad again. I thought it was time. And we looked around and I didn't find an assignment that would fit me and fit my family, so I took some short term assignments, which was a great thing that USIA could do, and I guess the Department does too. But being a smaller agency, USIA had a lot of flexibility in the personnel office. And I did a three or four week stint at the "Summit of the Eight" in Denver. It was when Russia was not a member of the G—they didn't call it the G-8 yet. They called it the "G-7" or the "G-7 plus 1." So, it wasn't called the G-8 at that stage, and I guess it's still not wholly the G-8 because Russia is not part of the economic elements of the G-7. So it was called the "Summit of the Eight." I had been at the G-7 in London with George Bush, I guess it was, the first George Bush as President, and that was called the "G-7 plus one." What they did was have several days of meetings as the G-7 and then when they finished the economic stuff and got into political matters, then the Russian leader, who I guess was Gorbachev, I'm not sure, joined the gathering.

Q: Probably Yeltsin. It might have been Gorbachev.

SHINKMAN: Might have been Gorbachev who came to London. Anyway, so in Denver, rather than call it the "G-7 plus one" they called it the "Summit of the Eight" and didn't use the G letter. And I did press work. I was liaison with the British media because I had come out of London most recently overseas. I did that assignment. I did a month assignment at the Ops Center at USIA.

I did a three week assignment, in Ottawa. There was the famous global anti-mining conference in Ottawa that was very controversial. Our participation was very controversial. And it overlapped with APEC. So the whole embassy had decamped out to Vancouver where APEC was being held to support the President's visit there. And they needed press support in Ottawa, backstop, for the American delegations at the de-mining conference. The USG representatives didn't go as full delegates, we went as observers.

Q: I talked to somebody who was involved with that. Bob Vekoff I don't know if you know him.

SHINKMAN: I know the name.

Q: And Bob was saying that he was very skeptical about the de-mining thing. He comes from, I'd say, the liberal side of the spectrum, but said this was a loaded thing. It was designed mainly to embarrass the United States. That actually we've done far more in de-mining than anybody else has. Did you get that feeling?



SHINKMAN: Yes. I mean I obviously did a lot of reading up on it, having not been familiar with the subject before I went up there. And that's absolutely true. The U.S. spent and gave more money and resources on de-mining than the rest of the world put together. The only sticking point for us were some mines in, I think, Cuba and in Korea, at Guantanamo and on the DMZ in Korea, and both of them were due to be phased out, they were not anti-personnel mines. We were absolutely on the side of the gods. And we felt very strongly that the writers of the proposal could have done an awful lot more to meet us and we could have participated. But there were political reasons why they didn't want to and wanted to feel holier than thou, and wrote the declaration in such a way that we couldn't sign on and everybody knew we couldn't sign on. There was no way we could have signed on. And so we were put in an unhappy camp with, I don't know, Cambodia, Burma, maybe Angola or something. You know, countries where they had serious problems with mines. But technologically, we were streets ahead of everyone else. And in terms of resources and concern about the issue, primarily, no one was doing more or cared more than we did. But it was a political believe political decision on the part of the organizers not to modify the text to allow us to participate.

Q: Going back to your original job in USIA, this was what now?

SHINKMAN: '94 to '97. I was Special Assistant to the Associate Director of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

Q: What was the bureau doing?

SHINKMAN: Well it's a very large bureau, it was one of the two largest at USIA. It runs all of our educational programs abroad, all of our exchanges. As you know, we have an enormous international visitor program where we bring tens of thousands of rising soon-to-be, we hope, influential foreigners to the United States and give them a month tour of this country. It's a most extraordinary project. Costs about ten thousand dollars a head, or more. And for my money, it's the best investment the U.S. government makes in anything.

Q: Oh absolutely. I mean anybody who knows anything about it knows how valuable it is. It has such lasting effects.



SHINKMAN: Yes. It's a life changing experience. They also run all the educational exchanges, the Fulbright program, the Humphrey program, the Eisenhower fellows; all the different educational exchange programs are done by ECA. We had a small arts program where we sent American artists and American art abroad. That was largely closed down by director Joe Duffey before he left. There was then such an outcry that it has now been started back up. We didn't do the speakers program. Speakers were done in the P bureau, what's now called IIP. But we did, as I say, educational and cultural affairs.

Q: Was Duffey the director when you were there?

SHINKMAN: Yes.

Q: People I've talked to, some speak in not very positive terms about Joe Duffey in that he didn't really engage and, two, all sorts of things. He wasn't organized. He didn't know what the program was about. He was basically opposed to it.

SHINKMAN: He was not USIA's strongest leader. Let me give you an example. What made the initial impression on me was, shortly after he had assumed office as director of USIA a very important position in the federal government, at least I think it was and most people in foreign affairs agree he came to London on a trip. The Voice of America, not surprisingly, and the BBC have semi-annual discussions where they compare notes. A very productive, intelligent thing to do. Well, Director Duffey came for one of these meetings and stayed a week. My first impression was, wait a second, this guy is the brand new head of an enormous organization with crises all over, and he can afford to spend a whole week sitting in London on talks that are useful for maybe a day and a half, but not for five working days?

And the other thing that struck me was this: he came into the embassy. He had a meeting with the USIS staff at the embassy, all the FSNs and Americans with the director. And he came in with an interesting discussion about the Information Age and a very sort of ethereal, theoretical discussion of foreign policy. I don't know if we called it public diplomacy then, but it was very thoughtful you know he had previously been president of American University and it was a very academic, thoughts in the wind type of discussion. And we all left the meeting and thought "Well gee, that's kind of interesting." And then we came back for another meeting a couple of days later and we thought, "Well he's given us the overall airy, fairy picture, now we are going to get the meat on the bones and here we go."



Well we sat through another hour of this sort of free range thinking about new directions in blah, blah, blah. And there was never any meat there. And certainly my impression was that this guy is probably a brilliant academic, but he certainly doesn't come across as a manager or a person who knows how to run the public diplomacy aspects of American foreign policy. And what's he doing? As nice as London is, what's he doing spending a week here when he's just taken over? So he was, I think, not our strongest leader.

Q: How did you find his influence when you were back in Washington?

SHINKMAN: In Washington, very much the same impression. I think he was a pleasant man. I don't think anyhow do I know? but no one I spoke to really disliked him as a person. He was affable, would smile and shake your hand when he met you. My boss of course reported directly to him. Jack Loiello reported directly to Joe Duffey and I think their relationship was pleasant and friendly. But you just didn't get the impression there was much "there" there. I don't mean he was stupid for a second. But just in terms of this job and being director - what now is considered the Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy - you know it's a tough job with a lot of work to do, on the Hill and in the media, all of our educational programs. I hate to say he wasn't engaged, because I think he probably was engaged. But he wasn't effectively engaged, that was my impression.

Q: And on these other jobs you had?

SHINKMAN: I was in the Ops Center. I was in Denver. I was in Ottawa. And then I also did a month's spell maybe it was three weeks in State Public Affairs. That was an interesting experience. They had a unit in EUR, it was called EUR/PPD, something like that it was the policy and press office for EUR. This was during Bosnia, and the White House or the NSC had appointed a lot of special advisors to the President on different aspects of what was going on in Bosnia. So you had in this building a bunch of different people who have senior rank and small offices who felt that they had to have their fingerprints on everything. My job was to develop cleared media guidance. It's now all done electronically, but then it was done with pieces of paper carried around. It's hard to believe that only six or eight years ago. We would get questions from State PA, the front office of Public Affairs, saying "These are the questions that we need answers to by the noon briefing." My office would get the ones for EUR and we would go through them, and the majority of them were always on Bosnia.



We then drafted the guidance. We would find the desk, the geographic Desk Officer, and he would come up with some guidance. We would edit it a little bit and then start this tortuous process of taking it around to all these people who felt they were terribly important and only they knew exactly how the guidance should read. So you would have this piece of paper with people and it wasn't just the people who were the special advisors to the President, but they would bring some political appointees with them, some sort of junior staffers who'd been on the campaign or something and they all felt that they had to input. You spent a frantic morning literally walking around this building, from office to office to office, taking guidance, having it cleared by these people, having it amended by these people, then going back to the first people. It was a nightmare. It really was a nightmare. But thank God I only had to do that for three weeks and then they brought somebody else in.

But what happened is, you came in at five or six in the morning, got the list, started the process, and when you had the final cleared guidance you would take it down and you would sit in front of the Richard Boucher, who at that time was Jamey Rubin or his deputy, and go over it with them so that they were comfortable with it for the noon briefing. And then you would just collapse because it was mentally exhausting.

Q: Did you feel that anything came out of these other than a bureaucratic re-scrambling of the words?

SHINKMAN: No. I think I could have sat down with the geographic desk officer in EUR and came up with the guidance. The two of us and it would have been fine.

Q: There was nobody in the Department's P Bureau who was able to, using a diplomatic term, kick-ass? I mean these people had too much clout with within the . . .

SHINKMAN: I think they did. I mean, this was on a day-by-day, hour-by-hour basis. It wasn't one major event where someone needed to jump in and say "get this done and move on with your life." This was every day, every single morning. So you couldn't invoke somebody from P. P would have to clear on the guidance always and they were always very quick. You know, all the professional staff, the career GS and Foreign Service staff in the building, knew the system and all were keen to make it work. Occasionally you would have a difficult person, but that was rare. It was these little enclaves of people who had been given a special title and then brought some sort of mid-level political appointees with them, where things would just get stuck. And it was frustrating.

Q: So after you finished these little bits and pieces?



SHINKMAN: So I did those bits and pieces and then a funny thing happened, also not atypical for the U.S. government, I'm afraid. As a cost-cutting measure, USIA decided to eliminate the position of press officer in Ottawa. Now Ottawa and I can go on with this at great length, but I won't. It's not the most glamorous capital in the world. But in terms of our relationships abroad, there's just no relationship that is more important not so much politically, but economically- than Canada. It's crazy. We do a billion dollars a day in trade with Canada. We do more trade with Canada than we do with all fifteen original members of the European Union together. I mean it's just extraordinary. It's an enormous trading relationship. We have a hundred million people crossing the border coming south every year. A hundred million people cross the border going north. It's a very, very complex relationship. And elements of it can go wrong very quickly with very major consequences.

I always remember reading an article, a statistic I keep in my mind. The example that is most often used is about the automobile industry. Detroit and Windsor and the trucks going back and forth across the border. I think it's called the Freedom Bridge with partially constructed cars on them. You know, the body is made in Detroit and then it goes to Windsor to have the engine installed or something, and then it comes back. You know, it moves back and forth. And GM estimates and I saw it in writing that every time one of their trucks is delayed at the border, for one minute it costs them a million dollars. Well that's just an astonishing statistic. And of course what that includes is all of the ripple effects. Everything slows down. All of their suppliers, the people who make the tires and people who harvest the rubber. It was an extraordinary statistic and drawn as large as possible. But still, a million dollars for one truck being stopped for one minute. So if you have even before 9/11 you have some crisis at the border because of a trade conflict or something, and a border closes for an hour, only, it's catastrophic to many of these big companies. What, I'm trying to say is that the importance of our mission in Canada is very high.

Canada also has a very large, literate press, most of which is anti-American. The idea that you could not have a press officer there, just give the media to somebody as an additional duty, was kind of silly. They closed the job in the summer of '97. By Thanksgiving of '97 they realized it was a mistake and reopened the position - it was closed I think for four months and started people bidding on it.



I was working in EUR, EU as it was called at USIA, and knew the office director. This job all of a sudden popped up, and there weren't that many people who were available for an off-cycle transfer. So I said I couldn't go right then, but I would be able to go in April. One of my firmest conviction and it's not shared by everybody in the Foreign Service is that I wouldn't take an assignment where I couldn't have my family with me. I have acquaintances who have taken jobs as an ambassador, which is the dream of many Foreign Service Officers, but their family had to stay back in the States. Well, I wouldn't do it. There isn't a job, including being an ambassador, that's worth it to me. So having my kids in school wasn't going to pull them out of school in January. And I wasn't going to go to Ottawa no matter how close it is to Washington without my family. So we negotiated on this and in the end I went up to Ottawa in April and my family came up in July as soon as school closed. Those three months, actually, were the only time in my 26 and half years in the foreign service that I was not co-located with my family for a substantial period of time. And it convinced me of the correctness of my decisions over the years. I just wouldn't do it.

Anyway, I took some French language refresher training and then moved up to Ottawa in April of 1998, and my family stayed in Washington on Separate Quarters Allowance, or whatever it's called. And as soon as school finished, I came down, joined them here and then brought them north. It worked out very well personally because the year before, 1997, the year I finished in the E bureau, my mother, who lived in Georgetown, had moved into an assisted living facility in the Washington area. Obviously I didn't want to be somewhere that was three plane flights and 24 hours away. So the job in Ottawa was really a gift. It was certainly not a great career enhancer, being the IO in Ottawa. But it enabled me to be close enough that we could come down and spend long weekends with my mother, which we did regularly until she died in 1999. It was the right assignment for a number of reasons. The proximity to here and it was also a fun job.

Q: You were there from 1998?

SHINKMAN: 1998 to 2002. Four years.

Q: Well let's talk about the Canadian press. I know our little organization with our oral histories, a Canadian correspondent here got a hold of our file on Canada. The most innocuous things. But guys were always talking about how sensitive the Canadians were to what Americans did and how it was kind of silly. And this is all of a sudden on the front page: "American diplomats find Canadians sensitive," or something like that.



SHINKMAN: Canadians are super sensitive. It was interesting, Stu; let me recount a couple of anecdotes that give measure to the relationship. We have a very good friend who was the science and technology officer in Ottawa who served most of his career; he had two or three assignments in Moscow back before the fall of the Wall. And he said he had never come across anti-Americanism in Moscow as virulent as he experienced in Canada.

My sister-in-law is British by birth, like my wife, and she and her husband live on a farm north of Toronto. We'd gone up for several years and spent summer vacations with them. Had a very pleasant time. Never noticed this anti-Americanism. If you travel and visit on holiday, you just don't notice it. And in retrospect, I don't know how I couldn't have. But you don't. Until we got there. And then we started experiencing the anti-Americanism. It's rife in the press. And it astonishes most Americans. It certainly astonished us. I could deal with it comfortably because most of my interlocutors were smart media people who knew not to say irritating things . . .

Q: And also, we're used to dealing with hostile governments anyways.

SHINKMAN: Absolutely. But the people hit hardest were my wife, who attended university while we were there, and my son, who was in prep school there. And he got this anti-American crap in his prep school every day, from other students, from faculty in the school. And you know, we spent a lot of time thinking about it and I try not to not trying to figure it out. There have been books and books and books written about it. But it's mostly, I think, the "little brother" syndrome. You know, "take me with you when you go to the dance. Take me with you when you go to the movies. You don't pay enough attention to me. You don't respect me. You don't think I'm important enough. You don't care." And so they will take everything as a slight. Everything. And it rarely is a slight on our part. But if it is, it is unintentional. We don't have anything against Canadians. But their anti-Americanism can be virulent.

Q: As press officer, could you have rational discussions about the papers' attitude with the people? Or was it sort of a "this is showbiz" or something like that?

SHINKMAN: Well both. Those whom I knew well and whom I respected, I would lunch with regularly. I tried at least once a week to take some journalist to lunch. And we got to know each other pretty well, would have dinner with our wives and that sort of stuff. And those sorts of people, you could have a talk with. And their usual response would mean, they are not stupid people; they are not unkind people, basically "you are being oversensitive to this." But I wasn't. I mean, if you hear the things that people say, when you first hear them, you think "I must have misheard" or "That person can't have meant what they said. They didn't understand what they were saying." Well they do, because there is this just virulent anti-Americanism.



They also think that we don't know them, we don't pay attention, so they can say anything. The most conspicuous example was when Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's press secretary called President Bush what did she call him? an idiot or a dolt or something. Some harsh, harsh word that she had no business using about any head of government, and she used it in front of the press. No Canadian was surprised well, they were a little surprised that she was so stupid to do it where it would become so quickly visible but no one was surprised that she said those words, because I do believe that's the way she felt.

Q: You were there during the whole Monica Lewinsky affair. How was that treated?

SHINKMAN: No. Lewinsky was . . . when was she? Was it '98? Was that the beginning?

Q: I think we're on '98.

SHINKMAN: That's right, because I was in the ops center. So yes, yes, it was going on. I think probably the Canadians reacted less to that than did other Europeans. But I always remember that period before I went to a post like London or Ottawa I went out of my way to meet all of the Washington correspondents for the major bureaus in that country and I kept in regular touch with all the Canadian bureau chiefs here in Washington, the bureau chiefs for Canadian media in Washington during my time at post. The thing they found most frustrating about the Lewinsky matter was not the story itself, but that their editors kept them chained to their desks in Washington as long as Lewinsky was in the news. They couldn't leave Washington and they couldn't try to cover this enormous, magnificent, rich country. They had to cover just Lewinsky. And I'm sure journalists around the world, and American journalists, felt the same way.

Q: Yeah. Talk about television and silliness really. You know, nothing like a little sex scandal. It really wasn't that big a deal.

SHINKMAN: Well, certainly not to the French and the Italians and certain other people.

Q: Were there sort of key people in the major newspapers, say the editors who were always trying to give it an anti-American press? Did this sell papers or was this how they felt or what?



SHINKMAN: I think all of the above. I think it's the way the felt, many of them. It certainly sells newspapers. There are some newspapers that are more conservative. Of course, Conrad Black started a new newspaper called the National Post and that was much more in synch with American views than was the rest of the print media in Canada, which is largely left wing. But it is what Canadians want to read. They want to believe the worst about us. And any news story, if there are two ways to take it, they will want to take it the way that's negative about the United States and prove their own superiority. They are always going on about how they have free health care. Their health care system is close to a state of collapse, but it is still free.

Q: We have Canadian cousins who spend most of their time running down to Rochester or Baltimore to get things they can't get up there.

SHINKMAN: That's right. It's ridiculous. When we left, there were something like ten MRI machines in the country. You would have to wait nine months to get an MRI, so everyone would travel across the border to get their health care.

So the Canadians have this inferiority. You know, they are the little brother. They're one-tenth our population. They like to say that we don't know anything about Canada. But I came to the firm conclusion that they don't know any more about us than we know about them. They know about Washington. They know about Florida, where they spend their summers. And that's about all they know about. Or the border states.

Q: Next month we are going down to visit our Canadian cousins in Ft. Lauderdale.

SHINKMAN: That's right. Snowbirds, as they call them,. I always remember, there was one campaign: the U.S. had done something which the Canadians interpreted as being egregiously anti-Canadaand someone tried to start a campaign to stop snowbirds from flying to Florida for the winter. Well, good luck. They want to be down there, just like we do, in the warm weather. I think practicality trumps politics.

Q: Cuba seems to be the designated neuralgic point that the Canadians keep making a big deal about. They know how to deal with the Cubans. I mean, Chrÿ½tien went down there, maybe during your time, and made a bunch of requests and all he got was a raspberry from Castro.



SHINKMAN: Yes. I think they think it's an easy one to do. It's one again where they can disagree with us for very little cost. A lot of Canadians don't realize what's going on on the island. They go to Cuban resorts. You know, you can go to a Cuban resort for dirt cheap fees and have a wonderful time on a sunny beach, not realizing quite what the dictatorship is doing on the rest of the island. So yes, they think it's a no cost thing on which they can disagree with us and show their moral superiority. But Chré½tien, yeah, accomplished nothing by going there.

Q: Was this when you think it was during this time or close to it when we came up with it's a double name of a congressional act . . .

SHINKMAN: Helms-Burton.

Q: Helms-Burton. Were you there then?

SHINKMAN: Well I was in place during Helms-Burton.

Q: Did that have any effect. I mean it was basically aimed against Canadians.

SHINKMAN: Well, yes. It was quite strictly applied, to foreign firms which took advantage of American assets that had been taken over by the Cuban government in Cuba. There were more stringent aspects to the act which the President waives each year which are not applied. But the elements of the act which do apply were fairly limited. There was one company called Sheerin, or something like that, that had moved into an office building and was using the assets of an American corporation that had been taken over by the Cuban government. And so we took them to task about that. We may have even closed down some of their business in the U.S. Some actions were taken, but they were not a lot. It wasn't a big thing. But it gave the Cubans a soap box to stand on and say how they were being more tolerant and understanding than we were.

Q: Did you notice a difference between, say, Ontario, which I'm told is the seat of this anti-Americanism, and then when you get out to Saskatchewan and Manitoba? It's a whole different world.



SHINKMAN: Absolutely. I think there is sort of an axis from Ottawa to Toronto, which is the focus of this anti-Americanism. But when you get to the Maritimes traveled as much as I could because it's a beautiful country didn't find it as much. You get out to Calgary, the oil patch, there are just hard charging businessmen who are either assigned to Calgary or to Houston and they move back and forth, or somewhere in the Middle East, and they just want to get on and do business. And you don't find it nearly as much in the press there. You find it to a certain extent, but not nearly as much in the press. Or in public discourse in Vancouver, British Columbia on the West Coast and Saskatchewan and Alberta, or in the Maritimes. And less actually in the Francophone regions, in Quebec. Quebec is sort of odd because they always want to be different. There's a line about "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." They felt a certain association with us because they disliked the central government in Canada in Ottawa. So there's a funny sort of triangle. But the French Canadians could also be difficult if they wanted to, be superior.

Q: Well I would think that with the French Canadians you would run into the mirror of the French intellectuals.

SHINKMAN: A certain amount. But thinking about intellectuals, the other thing you come across the more you spend time in Canada is the number of Americans there who have been there a long time, many of them in academia and in the media, who went to Canada during the Vietnam War. It's a long time ago. But there are people who, maybe in their early twenties in 1973, moved to Canada. Say they were born in '53, they would now be in their middle 50s, or early 50s. (Is that right? Am I doing my arithmetic right? Something like that). And who have burrowed in. Do not readily identify themselves as Americans. Want to but I don't know if they want to but it appears that they would like to be taken as just another Canadian. And you start slowly to find out that some of these people are American, or American by birth and probably still American citizens. I think particularly in academia there is a strong influence from expatriate Americans who have been teaching up there since they fled the United States in the '70s. That's still an influence. That will wane over time, but I don't think it's waning yet.

Q: Showing sort of the American bias, did we really care about this anti-Americanism? Or was this a funny quirk of these people to the north and what the hell?

SHINKMAN: It's what my mom called when we were children an "attention getting dodge." It's an attempt to get our attention. And we don't really care. I remember going to a talk where someone said that the Mexicans and Canadians vastly overestimate how important they are to us. Yet they're just not. There is the very important business and trade relationship. And that really is terribly important. It's actually much more important economically to them than it is to us.



Q: And that goes to mean it's like a force of gravity. What people think has nothing to do with business.

SHINKMAN: Yes. Eighty-five percent of their exports come to the United States. Well that's just an overwhelming dependence of one country on another. Something over forty percent of their GDP is in products that travel south across the border. So, politically the country may not be that important to us. Why they should still be in the G-8 is a major question I think that people ask. I don't think countries will be removed from the G-8, but it makes you wonder.

Q: Are they that big a commercial power to be there?

SHINKMAN: Where are they? I don't know where they are in the world. They've just been partners with us. I mean, it is an extraordinary successful relationship. It works extremely well. When I say that there are a hundred million people crossing the border each direction every year, almost all those crossings go effortlessly, almost seamlessly. There is hardly ever a problem. So the relationship works very well. They are members with us in NATO. They are, of course, UN members. They're in the OAS with us. They are in many associations with us and so they are important allies in those fields. And there are ways that they can and are helpful to us in those forums, like the OAS.

Q: Let's take an example. Say as press officer at country team meetings, or something like this, up comes the fact that The Globe and Mail has a nasty article. Would the ambassador pound and say "How dare they say that?" or was it just sort of shrug . . .

SHINKMAN: You have to let it roll off your back, unless it's factually wrong or really egregious. But the number of times that the ambassador and we would generally not do letters to the editor, because I don't think ambassadors should do letters to the editor - but we would do an op ed piece and say to the newspaper "Would you run this because we think your view on this is out of whack with reality?" But that would happen maybe not more than maybe a couple times a year. The rest of the time you just let it sort of roll off your back. I would call up journalists occasionally and say "This really is wacky stuff" and we would chat about it a while. And I would hope I made some impact that way. But you were never going to make any progress by . . .

Q: Well again, it comes back to show biz, doesn't it? I'm sure that reporters are hanging around looking for something to show how stupid or brutal we are.

SHINKMAN: Absolutely.



Q: How about the major papers outside of the Ottawa area? Were they different?

SHINKMAN: Well a lot of them belonged to chains. There is a large chain that used to be called the Southam newspapers. I'm not sure if it's still called Southam or not. There are very few large independent newspapers. The Toronto Star is one, and that's actually the largest circulation newspaper in the country, but almost all of its circulation is in Toronto. And then The Globe and Mail of course has national coverage. But most of the other papers in Calgary or in Vancouver or in Halifax are part of a chain, so they get their news from the same set of sources. And they hew pretty much to the same line.

Q: Who was our ambassador while you were there?

SHINKMAN: I had two ambassadors. Gordon Giffen was the ambassador when I arrived. He was a corporate lawyer from Atlanta. Very smart guy who had been very active in the second Clinton campaign. Was credited with having won Georgia for President Clinton, and he was given the posting. Did an exceptionally good job. Good to work with. I enjoyed working with him very much. Very bright guy. Very sensitive. He had actually been raised in Canada. His father was, I think, an insurance executive for one of the multinational insurance companies and had been in Toronto when Ambassador Giffen was in school.

But he was also given his background as a political operative here in the State he was very much as a behind the scenes kind of guy. He didn't do a lot of public speaking. He was good at it when he did it, but I never felt he was comfortable doing it. He wasn't a comfortable schmoozer. He had excellent connections in the government, knew all the people he needed to know and was very effective in dealing with them, but kept a lower profile.

After President Bush was elected, for my last year there, he sent up Paul Cellucci, the former governor of Massachusetts, to be ambassador, and he had had decades in public office and was much more comfortable in that sort of environment. He also did a brilliant job and is still doing a brilliant job as ambassador, but with a much, much more public face. Gave a lot more speeches. Was in the news a lot more, because he was comfortable in that environment. And as I said, he did an exceptionally strong job managing this awkward, enormous, relationship.

Q: How were speeches by the ambassador, other than trade?



SHINKMAN: They were received fairly well. Ambassador Cellucci was much more outspoken than Ambassador Giffen was. He said repeatedly in public that his marching orders from the President when he came to Canada consisted of just one item, which was: Tell the Canadians they need to spend more on defense. They had cut back and back and back, so they had hollowed out their defense structure. They had, you know, peacekeepers here and there, but really had hollowed out the military.

So Ambassador Cellucci delivered that message repeatedly, effectively, politely but clearly. And that of course hit the press. And of course the immediate reaction was outrage - "Who is this man to come and tell us what we should be doing?" But he was, as I say, always thoughtful, never harangued anybody, and presented the case about why Canada needed to do this. If Canada wanted to be a world player, then it needed to invest and not rely entirely on the United States for its military defense. It needs to have some sort of a defense program.

Q: The time you are talking about, Canada really had a couple of battalions that would go for peacekeeping and, from what I gather, they made a big deal about this. Essentially, they really didn't have much of an armed force.

SHINKMAN: They didn't. And of course they'd have to rely on us to transport their forces overseas. They really, really, had Jean Chrétien had really hollowed out the Canadian military. And it was a shame because they have a fine military and a proud heritage. I always remember when General Anthony Zinni, the guy used to be commandant of the Marine Corps, he came up for a talk that I went to. And of course Canadians had become famous as peacekeepers, and still do a fine job as peacekeepers, the Canadian forces. But Zinni told their Ministry of Defense in speeches that they needed to make a decision. If they wanted to be peacekeepers, that's fine, and that's what they will be. But they cannot be both a war fighting military structure and be peacekeepers, because they are very, very different roles and you can't train for both at the same time. You will lose your effectiveness as a military force if. That's entirely a decision for the Canadians to make, but they need to make that decision and not think they can fill both roles at once because they can't.

Q: Were there any crises that you had to deal with?

SHINKMAN: The major one, of course, was 9/11. And the outpouring from the Canadians was just extraordinary. I mean, the outpourings of sympathy and support. It was just a crazy time in the press office. I was in the office almost 24 hours a day for at least the first week. You know, there were countless offers of support. But there was a classic example. You know, we have so much that is similar about the two of us, living in the same continent and speaking the same language. We have a lot of similarities and the Canadians admire the United States in some ways if you get them privately, alone. But the offers to help were extraordinary.



If you remember, briefly, all the flights that were in the air, coming across the Atlantic, were told they could not come into the United States. Many of them, of course, were beyond the point of no return and could not fly back to Europe. So they all landed on the east and west coasts of Canada. Canada opened up all these old airports there are amazing photographs of old runways, with weeds in them because they had been shut down Air Force Bases, with gleaming 747s and 767s lined up along side them. Thirty thousand foreigners, mostly Americans, landed suddenly in these places ... in these remote outposts in Newfoundland and other places. And the travelers were to be put up in whatever remained of an airport or at a gymnasium or whatever. Well Canadians all got in their cars, drove out to the airports, and said "We want to bring these people back to our homes and they can stay in our guest rooms and we'll feed them." There was such an outpouring of affection and support that way that we ran out of Americans to give them. We had more offers of help than we had people who needed help.

So the Canadians can come through clearly they can come through when the situation calls for it. You would have the occasional as you did in every country, and I suppose even in this country you had the occasional rabid left winger who would say "Well, America had it coming to them." But that was really, really rare in the early months after 9/11.

Q: Were you seeing a concern at the time wouldn't be particularly in your bailiwick, but you were there in Islamic fundamentalism?

SHINKMAN: Not very much. The main way that came up was that there has always been a feeling that the border with Canada is porous, and that terrorists would come into Canada because their immigration rules are less strict than ours and then slip across the border (tape over, change tape). But there are large Muslim communities in Toronto and to a certain extent in Montreal, but, at least then, Islamic fundamentalism wasn't a major influence that anyone was worried about more than in the Muslim community in Chicago or somewhere like that.

Q: Were the universities you mentioned that there is this solid core, probably former Americans sitting there pissing on the United States. Did that reflect itself in American studies or anything else like that?



SHINKMAN: An amazing fact that used to always astonish me: you could not get a degree in Canada in any Canadian university well now you can, in Simon Fraser University a degree in American studies. Now, you would have thought it was the most logical subject for a major other than math or something to have American Studies because nothing could be more important to Canada than their relationship with the United States. Clearly. But you could not major in American studies. So I think that partly answers the question, that academia doesn't want to study the relationship as seriously as they should.

Q: Just as a last thing, what about your son at prep school? What sort of things was he getting?

SHINKMAN: I'll give you two quick examples and we can discuss it more next time. He came home from school one day and said that his history teacher had taught the class that the American constitution was a racist document. I said "My God, what are you talking about?" Well, I know what he was talking about, the clauses that say that an African American is three-fifths of a man. And I called the teacher absolutely outraged and I said "That's an element of our history that we have been struggling with for 250 years and doing darn well on, making progress on. It's something that no one thinks is right. They did at the time. No one in their right mind today certainly thinks of it as supportable. We've been working to correct it. To call the document, which is one of the most liberating documents in the history of the world, along with the Magna Carta perhaps, to call it a racist document to teenagers when you know that they're just taking shorthand notes in their notebook is highly irresponsible. The students are going to write 'U.S. constitution = racist' and they are not going to put any context. And racist is such a late 20th century, early 21st century adjective, that it's just not right." And the guy he had a nice talk said he completely understood my point of view and said he would stop teaching it.

The other one, where I was less successful, was where a social studies teacher had taught in Paul's class that American treatment of blacks was equivalent to Hitler's treatment of the Jews. And I was absolutely outraged. I called her, and I said "How can you say that? There is a history of abuse and segregation that we have been struggling to improve and have improved and continue to work to improve for generations. Comparing that to a system that was set up to eliminate a race of people, that's so unfair it's just not right." She was, in fact, from a family that had survived the holocaust, which made it all the more bizarre to me. She was not to be moved. She said "Nope." She said it was genocide or, I don't know what noun she used, but . . .

Q: Well was this a regular school?

SHINKMAN: It was a very elite prep school. It was the smartest prep school in Ottawa, called Ashbury.



Q: Were you able to sort of make this stand known to the authorities?

SHINKMAN: We did. And they were very responsive. The administration was very responsive. We met with the headmaster individually, my wife and I. And we met with their counselor, who was, interestingly, a Ghanaian-Canadian. Brilliant guy, very respected by the students. And both of them were very effective. The headmaster called a student assembly and talked to them about anti-Americanism. And obviously most of the bile that these kids were laying on my son was stuff that they brought from home. You know, the kids didn't think this stuff up. So the administration was very responsive. The teachers, as I've demonstrated, some of them were responsive, some of them weren't. And it was hard on my son.

It was the only time, Stu, in my whole career, when I came close to curtailing an assignment. One night when my son came home with one of these outrageous stories, my wife and I talked about it and I said to Paul at dinner, "If you want to leave here, I'll put in my papers tomorrow. Even if I have to resign from the Foreign Service, I'm not going to have you subjected to this." He said, "Let me think about it overnight." He was only sixteen at the time. And in the morning he said "You know, I'm not going to let them chase me away." He worked with a counselor and was taught some good ways to deal with this stuff. And he formed a group of friends who were not that way and he got through it and had a happy senior year. But his junior year was very difficult.

Q: Okay, well we'll call it off at this point. Is there anything more we should cover in Canada?

SHINKMAN: I don't think so. I think the anti-Americanism is the thing and I hate to have that sound like the focus, because I enjoyed my tour there.

Q: No, no, no. But there is something there.

SHINKMAN: Oh absolutely, and it colors your whole experience.

Q: And you talked about 9/11.

SHINKMAN: And the border, and the relationship. If it's of any interest we could talk about the new embassy building, which was a beautiful new building. But that may not be appropriate.

Q: Well we could talk about the new embassy building. And then, you left in two-thousand and . . . ?

SHINKMAN: Two.



Q: And also you might talk about the initial problems of dealing with the new Bush, Jr. administration, which were rough all over the world.

SHINKMAN: That, and consolidation of USIA into the State Department. That's an interesting subject too.

Q: We'll pick up those and then after that we'll go onto where?

SHINKMAN: Well, now, I guess.

Q: Where you are now.

SHINKMAN: Yes. Well, I came back and worked for WHA (Western Hemisphere Affairs) in Public Diplomacy for two years.

Q: Okay. So we'll do that then. Great.

Q: Okay, Buck, today is the 29th of March 2005. We're talking about Canada. We didn't talk about 9/11 last time.

SHINKMAN: I think we did, and the extraordinary outpouring of support from the Canadians. They really did a remarkable job. Ambassador Cellucci either has just left Ottawa this week or two. I was reading remarks that he delivered up in Ottawa recenthe said that by far the strongest memory he will take was coming out of the parliament building when he was about to address a gathering on the Friday after 9/11. (which was a Tuesday) and coming out of the building and seeing something like a hundred thousand people gathered on the lawns and down side streets in the center of Ottawa. It was just astonishing, absolutely astonishing. The Canadians were enormously supportive.



But the other thing I mentioned at the end of the previous tape was talking about the new embassy building, and that's kind of interesting for various reasons, particularly post-9/11. Of course, it was built before 9/11 but it had opened during the Clinton years. President Clinton came to open it. We did a fair amount of research and seem to have proven that it was the first new embassy building in the history of the republic that was opened by a sitting president. That was a reflection of the importance of the Canadian relationship, as we constantly told the Canadians. Also, not coincidentally, the ambassador at the time, Gordon Giffen, a corporate lawyer from Atlanta, a very effective ambassador, was a good friend of President Clinton and asked him to come up and open it.

It is a beautiful building designed by a New York architecture firm, built by Canadians, as is the form of these things. David Childs was the lead architect. What I found fascinating was, it's a massive looking building. Could easily be described as a fortress, but I don't think that's fair to it. What I found interesting is that, I got up there in the summer of '98. I think ground had been broken in the spring of '97. And we opened it in the fall of '99. So I had a year there at post during the second half of the construction of the project. As part of our public diplomacy outreach we got David Childs to come up from New York regularly well he came up for other reasons, to but he would meet with the press and give tours of the building to architects, local government officials, to the media to try to introduce the building to the community, because it has a very prominent position in the middle of downtown Ottawa. It was interesting during those tours to learn from the lead architect himself all the architectural details, what went into the design of the building, how hard he worked to make it match its environment, fit the environment which I think it did remarkably well but still meet the security concerns of the end of the 20th century and early 21st century.

It's a fascinating building. There were Canadians, of course, who were determined to dislike it. It didn't matter what it looked like. It could have looked like a Disneyland castle and they would have thought it was ugly. But most people I think came to like it. And as I said, the more we talked about it and the more we demonstrated how it had been designed to complement its very historic central location in Ottawa, I think the more acceptance there was of it. There is an analogous situation with the Canadian embassy here in Washington, which, as you know, has its own unique location on Pennsylvania Avenue between the capital and the White House, where there are no other embassies. It's big. It's a distinctive shape and has a very distinct, unique location.

Q: What about the border situation? Was there something you said you wanted to talk about that?



SHINKMAN: I think I may have touched on it in the context of 9/11, what a dramatic border it is. The fact that there are and you'll excuse me if I repeat statistics a hundred million people who cross the border in each direction every year. Two-hundred million border crossings is just an astonishing number. More than a billion dollars in trade a day crosses the border. It's more than 400 billion, I believe, a year. It's probably still true, but when the EU was just 15 nations, we did more trade with Canada than we did with all of the EU nations together. As a matter of fact, I think Ontario, the province of Ontario by itself is our nation's 8th largest trading partner. I think that's correct, which is a remarkable statement.

So the border is very, very important. And I will always remember a statistic and I think I probably gave it before but it is so memorable I will run the risk of repeating it. I remember reading an article in the newspaper about General Motors who said that when the flow of commerce for their trucks going across the borders taking partially assembled automobiles back across to different plants that straddle the border, or in cities straddling the border, that every minute a truck gets stopped costs them a million dollars in the ripple effect of all related associated costs. Now that's a pretty staggering figure. So the pressure to keep that border flowing in the harsh new security environment of post-9/11, it's an enormous challenge and it's one that both governments worked on very, very hard, and I think have done a good job on. But it's hard.

Q: Did we talk the last time about the immigrant community in Canada?

SHINKMAN: I don't recall.

Q: Was there anything there?

SHINKMAN: I can talk a little bit about it. The Canadians are always trying to find ways of differentiating themselves from us. I may have harped on this before. It's sometimes useful, but often just silly. They like to say that they're not a melting pot, they're a tapestry, I think is the phrase they use. Of course immigrants are like they are in the U.S. but to a much greater extent are extremely important to the economy of Canada because they don't have enough people. And as the economy grows, they need more people to do stuff. It is not a very well populated country. It has about 25 million people, and it's an enormous country with a big thriving economy. But their immigrants do seem to stay in enclaves.

Now that's a very broad generalization which, of course, could immediately be disproven I'm sure by statisticians, but that was my impression. Most of the immigrants are in the major cities, in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. They have large Muslim communities in those cities, but it's my impression, a very small number of immigrants outside those three major, major metropolitan areas.



Q: Did they come at us one way or another?

SHINKMAN: Not that I recall. You know, right after 9/11 there was a theory that some of the hijackers had come across the border from Canada. And some member of the U.S. Congress said something about the "porous border" and that sort of stuff. But any time you prove something like that, you can find evidence of the opposite, that it was a Muslim or an Islamic terrorist who had come into this country on a Fulbright grant and stayed here. So it's really hard for either side to point a finger at the other because each is wrestling with the same sort of situation. It does seem to be easier to get into Canada than into the United States, A. And B, that doesn't seem to make much difference in terms of the border and security.

Q: In 2001, George W. Bush became president and he got into confrontations with just about every country. But how was his talking about the administration's stance with the Canadians?

SHINKMAN: Well, we were very blessed with having a singularly successful and capable ambassador in the person of Paul Cellucci, former governor of the state of Massachusetts, former deputy governor and member of, I think, both of the legislative bodies in Massachusetts. He was an old contact of President Bush's from the time when they were both governors, through the National Governors Conference, along with Tom Ridge, also, the three of them. The President used to joke that all three of them married librarians, which is true, and all married above their station and above their intellect. It was a nice little gentle joke.

Anyway, Paul Cellucci was a good friend of the President and had been so for many years. He was also being a very accomplished politician, in the best sense of the word, was really good at handling the Canadians. He knew how to speak effectively, openly, not in a challenging way, but directly to the Canadians. His predecessor, Gordon Giffen, had been very effective also, but in a much more behind the scenes way, working with Members of Parliament and the government. Ambassador Cellucci was very good at getting out and speaking publicly. He really had a dramatic effect in terms of raising the profile of the embassy and of the ambassadorship, and I think went a long way to smoothing what might otherwise have been some ruffled feathers.

So I didn't feel that things took a real turn for the worse or anything like that when the Bush administration came in. His policies were presented properly and clearly by Ambassador Cellucci, and it was accepted that there might have been a difference of opinion if there was a difference but this was, not a crazy, gun slinging president. That sort of stuff, I think, you will find everywhere and it was certainly present, but it wasn't prevalent. I think the ambassador did an exceptionally good job of explaining President Bush's policies clearly. So we didn't have that many troubles.



Q: Well did you have a problem in dealing with the press? I mean, were they gunning for . . .

SHINKMAN: I didn't. Obviously as press spokesman at the embassy I got to know all the press very well. And there were some who were determined to be against our policies no matter what. But not very many of those. Conrad Black former owner of the Daily Telegraph in London had started a new national newspaper called the National Post, which was largely pro-American, as is Conrad Black. That was a help to us. The Globe and Mail is the other prominent newspaper they have just a couple of newspapers which really are national, which are sold and read across the country. The Globe and Mail was generally more skeptical about a Republican administration. And that was predictable. But I always felt that most of the journalists were well educated and gave us a fair shot.

Occasionally you would see columnists, and usually not regular columnists but guest columnists, who would write crazy stuff, I mean just outrageous stuff. And when we saw it published in a generally respectable newspaper, it really was quite startling. There was a famous article that I've probably got tucked away at home somewhere, a column by a woman she might even have been a Member of Parliament, I'm not sure and the theme of it was something along the lines of: "Americans, don't you hate the bastards?" I think that was the phrase she used. Or, "I really hate the bastards" or something like that. This was in a national newspaper. It was absolutely appalling. But they get away with that because they think and I'm sure I said this before in this tape about my time in Canada they think it doesn't matter. They think that Americans won't notice because we just generally don't notice them, which is true in some regards, and so they can say the most outrageous things.

As I mentioned earlier, the Prime Minister's press spokesman was caught by a journalist calling President Bush a moron. Now she didn't realize she was speaking to the press, but just the fact that a press spokesman from the head of government could be so incautious under any circumstances as to call, not just the head of state of another government, but the head of state of the United States, a moron was just unbelievable.

Q: Did you get involved in that?

SHINKMAN: Well, not really. That was an internal Canadian matter. We wouldn't respond to something like that. She got the sack immediately even though she had been a press spokesman for the Prime Minister for years and years. She was very highly regarded by him. But once that happened, she had to go. And she went.

Q: Didn't somebody else there compare Bush to Hitler or something like that?



SHINKMAN: It wouldn't surprise me, but I don't remember that specific thing. But, yes, they have some pretty far left wing politicians there and you do occasionally get some craziness like that. I don't remember hearing that often, but it wouldn't surprise me if it had been said.

Q: You were there until 2002?

SHINKMAN: Summer of 2002, right.

Q: Were there any developments after Bush came in. I assume he had the usual visit up there.

SHINKMAN: Well, there was a visit that was supposed to be on that had to be postponed. Relations between President Bush and Prime Minister Chr  tien were not particularly good. Chr  tien seemed to have gotten along pretty well with President Clinton, but he and Bush didn't hit it off particularly well. And there were some things as I've commented before the Canadians would look for ways to kind of thumb their nose at us, and they thought that it really didn't matter. Cuba was the most conspicuous example. They would cozy up to the Cubans knowing full well that that sent large percentages of the American electorate ballistic.

Bush and Chr  tien were not great pals and were clearly not destined to be. There was I think at least one visit that was postponed, it might have been by the Secretary of State or it might have been by the President, just to generally acknowledge, not verbally of course, that it was because we were a little ticked off and they had just been a little too stupid in saying these things that they thought they could get away with cost-free, which, of course, were not cost-free.

Q: Who was keeping book on it? When was enough enough and all that? Was this coming out of our embassy or was this coming pretty much from the White House?

SHINKMAN: What do you mean when's enough?

Q: Well in other words, when you say things aren't cost free, at a certain point . . .

SHINKMAN: Oh, okay. I think it was the NSC (National Security Council). I think there were people in the NSC who were watching this who said privately to themselves and in the confines of the NSC, "You know, we don't have to put up with this stuff. They can say whatever they want, but there's going to be a price." I don't think it was the Department as much. That was my impression. I think it was the NSC.



Q: Well then, 2002 you came back to Washington?

SHINKMAN: I came back to Washington. I was called always very flatteringly by a woman who a Foreign Service Officer I had enormous respect for, Betsy Whitaker, who was the office director for WHA Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, what we used to call in USIA the Area Office. She needed a deputy and she called me and asked me whether I would bid on the job. Of course I was very flattered to be asked and did bid on the job and got the job.

I had not served in WHA before except that, during the time I was in Canada, Madeleine Albright decided that the Department was going to move Canada from EUR to what became WHA. (Before that it was ARA, of course.) So my experience in WHA was thrust upon me rather than my choice. It was a new area of the world for me. And I had a wonderful year with her and then she was replaced by a guy called Bill Bach. I had a very successful two years as the Deputy Area Director, spending most of my time with an office of, I guess, fifteen or twenty people, supporting the public affairs sections at embassies throughout the hemisphere.

I spent a lot of time traveling in the hemisphere. I think I got to sixteen or eighteen countries in the two years. Almost all of the countries I had never been to in my life. And it really is a unique experience to visit a city like Port-au-Prince, Haiti. It's really an experience, particularly for an American, particularly for an American diplomat, to visit a city like Havana, Cuba. And then to get way down into the southern cone and the Andean countries. And Central America. I found it fascinating and interesting, and hope that I had a positive effect.

Q: Did you have any feel for how we were presenting ourselves, because after 9/11 and all, there was great concern about how we were dealing with the Arabs, but how about with Latin America or the Western Hemisphere?

SHINKMAN: You know, it had been years since we had had a confirmed Assistant Secretary of State for WHA or ARA, before Roger Noriega became [Assistant] Secretary of State. Before him we had an Acting Assisting Secretary of State in Curt Struble, a career Foreign Service Officer. He was acting because before him was Acting Assistant Secretary of State Otto Reich, who was, for reasons more complicated than I can explain, unconfirmable on Capital Hill. He was Acting Assistant Secretary for a year, I guess. Before him we had Peter Romero, career Foreign Service was he career Foreign Service? I'm not sure - but also for whatever reason not confirmable. So you have to go back quite a few years to find a confirmed Assistant Secretary of State for ARA or WHA.



I think that caused and continues to cause a certain amount of comment that that's not coincidence, that that reflects a lack of attention by the U.S. federal government to affairs in this hemisphere. And of course Assistant Secretary Noriega has faced that charge also. He has done a lot to reverse that view, but it is a view that was widely held, that we are not paying attention. It's kind of ironic for me to come from a country like Canada, which is obsessed with the idea that we don't pay enough attention to them, to move into a whole area where people not quite such an obsession, but there is the widespread feeling that we don't do enough.

Q: Did you get any fee although I realize you had a hemisphere wide mandate for the wedding of Canada into the ARA, or now WHA tub? In a way, I would think they would be much more comfortable in Europe.

SHINKMAN: I think Canadians would feel that way. I think some of the thunder, however, was stolen by the fact that they lumped us geographically in their foreign ministry in this hemisphere. Of course it's not an exactly analogous situation. Of course that sort of move is invisible to 99.9 percent of the population. So I think among pundits in the newspapers, some said, "Well, here we are being relegated to another backwater. It just confirms what I've always said, that the Americans don't have enough respect for us or pay enough attention to us." But I don't think it caused much of a fuss. And as I said, the rejoinder always was that they treated us in a reciprocal way.

Q: Yeah. So you could always say, "We have to treat you with the same amount of concern Argentina or Uruguay too."

SHINKMAN: That would win their hearts immediately. But it does make a certain amount of sense. I mean, Canada is an odd country out in the Western Hemisphere context, but it is a Western Hemisphere country. They are very active in the OAS with us. They can have influence in a lot of forums that we can't. They are a useful ally and partner. And I think they can be very helpful to us when they want to be. So I don't think it was a mistake. Having served an awful lot in Western Europe, I think fits in Western Europe better too, but I don't think it's a big deal.

Q: What about - during the time you were here in Washington her dealing with Cuba? How did that go?



SHINKMAN: My dealings with Cuba, which have been very few, as with most people, really started when I was in Canada because that was one of the issues where they really do differ with us. It's a conscious decision on their part. And at one stage the prime minister, Jean Chrétien, was going to Havana, and the media wanted our reaction. I knew enough, having followed Cuban policy at a distance over the years, to know that the subject of Cuba in the U.S. government is absolutely toxic. And no matter what you do, probably you are going to set a foot wrong as far as someone is concerned. You need to be really, really careful. Careers have been made, broken more broken than made just by brushing up against Cuban policy.

I wanted to be responsive because it was sort of a poke in our eye for Jean Chrétien - I mean the Prime Minister for heaven's sake to go down to Cuba. So I got some policy from the Office of Cuban Affairs and I wrote it on a poster board, like this one right here, or an easel. I told the camera crew from the TV station, from CBC I guess it was, I said "Here are the questions I'm prepared to answer. You can ask me these questions. If you ask me anything else, I'm not going to be able to answer." And then I wrote out the answers for myself to make sure I got the words, which had been cleared back here in Washington, right. I had the TV cameras stand next to the poster board so that when they asked me a question I could look thoughtful and glance off camera, as if I was sort of marshalling my thoughts, when what I was actually doing was reading the text to make sure I got it exactly right because I was going to be damned if I was going to step off the reservation. And that was the interview I did on Cuba.

Since coming back to Washington, I have developed enormous admiration for our diplomats who work in Havana. It's a horrible, hostile environment. Castro is a master at portraying himself as a fuzzy old bear anachronism of a 1950's revolutionary, when he is of course a harsh dictator. You know, was it two years ago or three when they locked up dozens of so called dissidents for things like having a typewriter that wasn't registered with the local police. It was fascinating, my trip there. I mean I really, really enjoyed it because it was so eye opening.

I remember talking with an embassy officer who was from the LEGATT Office, the legal attaché. The Cubans were cooperating with us, for some reasons that are still murky but you never will know, on a pedophile case. One of these horrible international stories about child abuse. And the LEGATT needed to talk to a Cuban. So with the Cuban police he went to the neighborhood and they found the local party neighborhood block captain. They said "We need to talk to so-and-so in this apartment." The block captain said "Oh, okay." And he went over to a cabinet on the wall, opened it up, and it was a key cabinet. And he took out a key to that apartment. And they went to that apartment and he opened the front door and in they went. The block captain had a key to the front door of every property on the block. Just mind-boggling intrusion of government into private lives. Absolutely no privacy.



They locked up I think one of the shames of the American Library Association is the Cubans locked up librarians. I mean real librarians. These weren't spies who were posing as librarians. These were women who were running a little library in their homes of a couple hundred books, many of them donated by the U.S. government, children's books, this sort of stuff. And the Cubans would lock them up for anti-state activities or some such title. And the ALA never registered as the National Press Club always does whenever journalists are abused never registered a prominent complaint against them.

But the intrusion of the government into the private life of Cubans they have no private life and the complete dictatorial powers and the horrible way in which they are imposed, made a lasting impression on me. While I was in Havana, we had dinner at the PAO's residence with the spouses of about fifteen of the dissidents. I remember one of them saying to me at the end of the evening, "Whatever you do, please do not lift the embargo, because it will accomplish nothing for us and will only extend the longevity of Fidel Castro." So everyone, of course, just plays a waiting game. Unfortunately he's apparently in remarkably robust health, but everybody is just waiting.

Q: Well when you were in Canada, as I recall, when Chrétien went to Cuba this was a big deal, being a prime minister and all. And he asked for certain things, including letting people go. And Castro just did nothing.

SHINKMAN: Exactly right. Not a thing. Not a thing.

Q: So did this register with the Canadians?

SHINKMAN: I think it may have. Yes. I mean, I think it didn't help John Chrétien's legacy. He was on his last run anyways and it was quite clear that he wasn't going to be running again for Prime Minister, I believe, at that stage. I don't think it was enough to make voters switch parties, or switch allegiances, but it definitely did register. And several columnists wrote about the fact that he'd gone down there to confront Mr. Castro in his own den and made these demands, none of which were granted, which is an embarrassment for a Prime Minister of a country.

Q: By the time you got back, USIA had been amalgamated into the State Department?

SHINKMAN: It was amalgamated in '99. And I came back about two and a half years later. And of course the amalgamation is still going on. Consolidation is the approved word.

Q: How did you find this? The new game?



SHINKMAN: Still settling down, still very much settling down. It was terribly important that we get elements of USIA, if not all of it, over here into the main State Department building. I think for Public Diplomacy to play a central role it has got to be not just integrated on the organization chart, but the people have to be over here so they are mixing with each other. In WHA/PDA, I found, obviously, more interaction with all the people in the geographic offices that I needed to deal with, the people in the Andean regional office and the Brazil and Southern Cone and the Caribbean office, than I ever would have had I been over in the old USIA building. I found that was terribly important. And the more enlightened Office Director welcomed you in and welcomed my Desk Officers to their weekly staff meetings. So USIA elements weren't really integrated into Departmental operations. And I personalland this is just my viel think that the people in IIP and ECA, the two bureaus over there in the old USIA building, need to get over here somewhere, if not in the main building, preferably, then at least in something like the building across the street so there's much more interaction.

Q: Well I must say that I've done a lot of interviewing of USIA retirees. And really when you get to a Washington assignment for someone, frankly, it's kind of boring because it's pretty much nuts and bolts and personnel and there is hardly any tie-in to policy. And then when you are overseas, I mean, they're probably the point of the spear.

SHINKMAN: I think that's exactly right. I've always felt that overseas our jobs in Public Diplomacy were so much more interesting than any other job in the embassy. But you get back to Washington, the whole flow, the whole balance scale is just so different. The regional offices in Washington, the political offices, really do tell the field what to do. They come up with the marching orders, whether from the Undersecretary, whether from P or whether from the Office Director in the Caribbean region. Cables go out, or e-mails now more, to the embassy saying "Here are your marching orders. You do this and this."

Whereas it's the opposite for us. In Public Diplomacy we react to the field. It's the field that takes the lead and decides, due to their local circumstances, the best way to implement American foreign policy through Public Diplomacy. And then we support them. So they come to us, not with demands, but with requests for us to support. I think jobs in Washington in the political cone, for instance, or archetypal political jobs in Washington, are more rewarding because they are really involved in making policy, and then you send it to the field to be implemented. Whereas it's kind of the reverse flow in Public Diplomacy.

Q: Well then, you did this for two years. And then what? Retired?



SHINKMAN: I retired. There must be a better word. As soon as I knew I was going to retire, as soon as my wife and I had made that decision, I banished the word "retire" from my lexicon. When you hear that word you think about going out and playing golf, moving to Ft. Lauderdale, that sort of stuff. And I was 61 years old, just turned 61, and obviously planned to work for many more years, not least because Riggs Bank wants me to work until I pay off our mortgage or whatever. So I knew I was going to be doing other things.

The State Department runs an excellent program called the Job Search Program where they give you two months. It used to give three months, but two months is still generous where they give you a month of intensive training in how to do interviews, what to wear, how to search for jobs, how to network, all that sort of stuff, and a second month where you go out and apply it. I finished working in WHA at the end of July last year, 2004, with the intention that I would go through the Job Search Program, fully intending to find a job that I would start on the Monday after I officially retired, working 8-5 in some office somewhere else.

But over the course of those two months, I decided that that wasn't what I wanted to do. I wanted to A) make sure I only did things that I really wanted to do, ( At this stage in my life I don't need to do things I don't want to do.) and B) maybe I could pull some pieces together and come up with some bits and pieces, and put them together and have a fun life with a little more flexible schedule. So I did that. This isn't really State Department oral history, but I have had an affection for motorcycles for the last almost 40 years. 38 years. And an affection for a particular brand of motorcycle called Harley Davidson, an American manufacturer.

Q: The hog?

SHINKMAN: Well, many of them are called hogs, yes. For the last 28 years, since 1977, when I got my first Harley. I've had Harleys with me at my posts all over the world. And over the years I've gotten to know several senior executives in the corporation - they are in Milwaukee but, particularly well, the Vice President for Government Affairs. So I wrote him a letter last summer when I was in the Job Search Program and said "You know, I'm looking for something to do. You don't have an office in Washington. What do you think?" I got a nice letter back from him saying "Gee, what an interesting idea. But actually we have a small government operations office. It's a handful of us" three or four of them "and we are doing pretty well as we are. So I don't think we have anything to offer you." So I said "Okay, fine."



I've never been to Milwaukee, but Harley Davidson celebrated its hundredth anniversary two years ago in 2003. It is sort of a Mecca for Harley riders, so I said to my friend "I think my wife and I are just going to come out anyways to see Milwaukee. I'd like to see it. And while I'm there, can I meet with you?" So, nice guy, he said "Sure, come on out." And he ended up making a day's worth of appointments for me with the people in the Office of Government Affairs and the Office of Communications, both fields that I'd fit comfortably into. And I had dinner with two of their Vice Presidents and my wife.

We came back to Washington, and I went back into the job search, continued the Job Search Program. Looked at some other options. And then about that same time, I ran into a very good friend, a Foreign Service Officer called Joe Johnson, a Public Diplomacy officer. He was the head of an office called e-Diplomacy, which is in IRM, the Bureau of Information Resource Management. e-Diplomacy's job is this small office where we are sitting right now, of about 15 to 18 people to try and integrate policy and technology in a way that policy drives the development of technology and not the other way around. It's not the IT people who come to you and say "We have this marvelous new program. Now you can use it to go out and do your job." We go to them and say "We need to accomplish this. What can you develop that we can use to accomplish this?" It's an interesting job. I've never worked in technology before in my life.

In this Office of e-Diplomacy they have a billet for each of the cones. They have a billet for a Public Diplomacy Officer, an Econ officer, a Consular officer, an OMS, a Political officer. And the Public Diplomacy officer job was open. There were no bidders on it. Joe said to me and I had chatted on a number of occasions "You know, I'd be happy to have you come and fill this job. If you don't want to work full time" which is what I had told him "I think it can be done on a less than full time basis." It was always with the understanding that if a Foreign Service Officer without a job, if HR calls up and says "We've got this unassigned FSO. We need a spot for him." Zing, he's going in there. I could be out by the end of the week.

So I said "Sure, I'll give it a try." And, starting last November, I started working in e-Diplomacy about five hours a day, about 25 hours a week, which is great fun. I'm learning all kinds of stuff that I never knew before. And I think at this stage in my life, it's not a bad thing to be learning challenging new things. At about the same time I got a phone call from my friend at Harley Davidson saying "When you were up here, everyone was very impressed with you" it was a very nice thing of him to say and I wonder if maybe there aren't some ways that we can collaborate." So that was an exciting phone call to receive.



Over the course of the next month or two we worked up an agreement where I now represent Harley Davidson, particularly in developing their sales in east Asia, where there is a large demand for motorcycles. There are economies out there that are growing very fast, so people can afford to buy motorcycles. But at the same time there are outrageously unfair tariff and duty regimens. A lot of those problems are being dealt with through bi-national trade associations, business councils. Harley is a member of these various business councils, all of them based in Washington, but rarely can the company afford to have somebody come down for a one or two hour meeting and then go back to Milwaukee. So now I regularly attend on their behalf.

I am working for Harley Davidson for four or five hours a week. The most recent example being this morning. I went to a briefing by the ambassador of Thailand about Tsunami relief. And we are trying very hard they have non-tariff barriers preventing us from selling our motorcycles in Thailand. So, I attended as I wanted to meet the people at the embassy. And, we are also making a large contribution to Tsunami relief.

Those two things are kind of fitting together. I have much less job security now. I mean, I have worked for the Foreign Service for twenty-six and a half years where you knew that that paycheck was going to be coming in even if you didn't have a desk to go to. You had absolute job security. Now, I have virtually none. Harley Davidson could pull the plug, although we agreed to do it for a year and see how it works out. And the Office of e-Diplomacy could do the same thing tomorrow. However, they seem to be well pleased with what I'm doing in e-Diplomacy, so I don't think that's likely to happen.

Q: You opened up two lines of inquiry. One about the Harley Davidson. I would think that what you would be up against the Isuzu or whatever it is, the Japanese motorcycle makers.

SHINKMAN: There are four major Japanese manufacturers. They are very, very powerful. Honda, Suzuki, Kawasaki and Yamaha. And they are very big companies, very powerful companies. Two of them also make cars. But Harley Davidson is an American icon.

Q: A tremendous name.

SHINKMAN: Tremendous name. In terms of brand recognition, it's right up there with Coca Cola and Boeing and IBM and those sorts of names. And the fact that we only manufacture motorcycles in the United States makes it really an American icon. And an awful lot of people like that. Harley also makes great motorcycles. They have done an absolute turnaround in the last 25 years and gone from making not such solid, reliable motorcycles to ones now that are completely reliable. They are just great, great machines. Harley just came out with a new model two years ago that's incredibly fast with a liquid cooled engine that's really nifty. It's a great company, which make great products, which are in high demand.



And what's funny not in an amusing sense is that some of our target countries have tax structures that keep us out but don't really accomplish anything because the country doesn't make large motorcycles. Harley only makes large displacement motorcycles and the duties are so high that they stop people from buying them. So no tax revenue is generated. They are not revenue enhancing measures. All they do is keep us out without protecting any domestic industry. So we are struggling with that. And I think we're making some progress.

Q: On e-Diplomacy, what the hell is this? What do you mean? What do you do?

SHINKMAN: Well, I work on various things. Any Public Diplomacy officer will know the letters DRS, the Distribution Record System where they keep track of contacts. Every embassy has some sort of a contact record system. They are usually fragmented. The Political Section will have one, probably. And then all the systems will be consolidated for the Embassy's Fourth of July party. And then once that's gone, the impetus to coordinate it all goes away. These systems run from very sophisticated electronic systems literally to posts where the senior FSN has a shoebox in the bottom drawer of her desk with 3 by 5 cards in it saying who the current Minister of Culture is. There is a feeling in this day and age that we need to marshal our information better. There also, of course, is a mandate from the Congress that we need to keep better track of the people we spend money on, particularly student exchanges, post 9/11, of course, International Visitors that we bring into the country, as well as students we bring here. We need to keep track of who these people are, partially for security reasons but also to document how we've spent our money, and then to follow up with them.

You know, the International Visitor Program that I'm sure you sent people on when you were on active duty and I sent people on when I was on active duty it's probably the most life changing thing you can give to a contact who you respect abroad. It costs a lot of money. To send someone here for a month costs well over ten thousand dollars. It cost ten thousand dollars the last time I checked, which was probably four or five years ago. So it's a major investment of money by the U.S. government. And we find that we don't keep track of them very well. And I've as they are called will quite often over time just lose contact with the embassy. Well, that's crazy. After we've invested this money in a person, we should maintain contact. So there are directives from Congress to do a better job of tracking that.



This all comes under what I now know as the generic title of "contact management." And so in e-Diplomacy we are looking at since I'm a Public Diplomacy officer and Public Affairs abroad has taken the lead on this generally at developing some sort of a system perhaps with Microsoft, perhaps with some other company that could be used not just to consolidate information at post so that the Political section knows who Public Affairs is in touch with and vice versa, but also so the area office in Washington knows who the embassy has been in touch with, and that other U.S. embassies in the region may know who people have been in touch with. This is a major exercise, to go from the shoebox in the desk drawer to an enterprise-wide which is a phrase I now know means across the whole State Department system. I think it will be years before we get to it. But that's the sort of thing we are looking at.

Looking at what's called "content management." You look at a web site. Virtually every U.S. embassy in the world has a public web site and a private internal intranet site. And there is very little coherence among them in terms of how the sites look and how you maneuver in them, how you navigate. There's a feeling that really, in this day and age, major corporations are much better than the U.S. Government is at sharing the knowledge they have, the information they have, in the company. We need to do a better job of that. You hear all sorts of things like "communities of practice," the COP. Again, these are all interesting expressions that I have learned. I hadn't the foggiest idea what they meant before I moved to e-Diplomacy. And my knowledge is still somewhat foggy, but it's somewhat . . .

Q: But you know the acronyms, so you can throw those out.

SHINKMAN: I can throw them out with the best of them. Like any good FSO, I'm great with initials. We do that sort of stuff and it is interesting work. It really is. And I'm dealing with people who not so much in this office although to some degree in this office who are completely technical oriented ... you know, the IMOs abroad, the Information Management Officers at posts, and trying to keep a level-headed FSO generalist perspective on things. It is fun, it's interesting work. It really is.

Q: Okay. Well, I guess it's a good place to stop.

SHINKMAN: I think so. I've enjoyed this enormously.

Q: I want to thank you, but I want to say one thing. As a professional consular officer for thirty years, watch it on those damn motorcycles because I have including FSOI have arranged for the shipment back of the remains of motorcycle . . .

SHINKMAN: On this cheerful note, Stu. No. I am aware of that and I am careful.



End of interview